

. The Truth will not Help Us

In 1704 the English ship *Worcester* puts into Leith Harbour after a voyage from India. The town's people are suspicious of the crew, and even revengeful, for many of their sons have vanished on board a local ship trading to India, and who knows that the *Worcester* is not a pirate ship? A whispering campaign opens, and people demand action by the authorities. So the captain, first mate and gunner are arrested on a charge of piracy. They are not tried, only 'investigated'. The 'investigation' becomes a distortion of justice, and the three innocent men are convicted and hanged.

In retelling this strange story Mr Bowen imagines the English in Leith to have been subjected to the whisperings and judicial miscarriage which have been the lot of persons accused of 'un-American' activities in recent years. The result is an absorbing mixture of adventure and political satire.

*The Truth
Will not Help Us.*

EMBROIDERY ON AN
HISTORICAL THEME BY

John Bowen

1916
CHATTO & WINDUS
LONDON

**PUBLISHED BY
CHATTO AND WINDUS LTD
42 WILLIAM IV STREET
LONDON WC2**

**CLARKE, IRWIN AND CO LTD
TORONTO**

FOREWORD

IN 1705, Captain Thomas Green of the vessel *Worcester*, his first mate James Madder, and his gunner James Simpson were hanged on Leith Sands for piracy. It was alleged, specifically, that the *Worcester* had pirated a Scottish vessel, the *Speedy Return*, although, before the execution, two sailors from the *Speedy Return* had been discovered in London, and had sworn out affidavits to the effect that they had never heard of Captain Green or his vessel. But this was at a time just before the Act of Union was passed when anti-English feeling in Scotland was strong. Green and his colleagues were not hanged because they were pirates, but because they were English. At a time of fear and anger, the truth gets remote, the safeguards of law are destroyed and innocent men are hurt.

I have treated history in this book much as writers have always treated myth, rewriting it in clothes and an idiom that are fairly contemporary, using as much as I can, inventing where I have had to, discarding what it would be inconvenient to retain. Where time is roughly contemporary, the place has remained indefinite. The most obvious substitution in this story is that, for the mockery of a trial that Green and his men endured, I have used the procedure of the un-

FOREWORD

American Activities Committee, which has seemed to me the nearest modern equivalent: anyone who feels the parody to be unfair would do well to read the Committee's own records. The evidence and arguments in this section of the book, however, are in the main those that were heard at the trial itself, which is reported in Vol. XIV of Cobbett's *State Trials*.

For those interested, there is a short account of the *Worcester* affair in the 'Ramillies' volume of Dr. G. M. Trevelyan's *England in the Reign of Queen Anne*, from which I have quoted to make epigraphs to Chapters I, II, III, V and VII. A much more complete account, in which the evidence is examined in detail, is by the late Sir Richard Temple in his *The Tragedy of the Worcester*.

CONTENTS

| | | |
|------|----------------|----------------|
| | • | |
| I | Arrival | <i>page</i> 15 |
| II | Capture | 27 |
| III | • Rumours | 41 |
| • IV | Case Histories | 75 |
| V | Trial | 127 |
| • VI | Appeal | 165 |
| VII | Execution | 199 |

‘. . . I think, and so ought all good Christians, that there is already too much innocent blood taken. Dear Sir, I assure you that e’er long you will know the mistake this nation has run into in our case, when the truth will not help us.’

*George Kitchen of the Worcester
in a letter to his uncle and
aunt, written in prison,
12 April 1705*

ARRIVAL

'At the end of July, 1704 . . . there put into the harbour of Leith an English trading vessel, the Worcester. Her Captain, Thomas Green, a simple young fellow of twenty-six, thought life sweet, bringing home his ship after a successful voyage to Calcutta. Fear of the French privateers from Dunkirk had caused him to make the wide circuit of Ireland and Cape Wrath, rather than take, without an escort, the direct route to London by the Channel and the Straits of Dover. Having reached the mouth of the Forth, he put into the port of Scotland's capital to wait there for a convoy sailing south. . . .'

G. M. TREVELYAN:

England Under Queen Anne—Ramillies.

WHILE still a long way off, the ship could be seen. Mr Hancock, who was taking a stroll along the harbour wall that morning, remarked to his wife that it was 'no bigger than a man's hand', and she agreed with him. The people of that city were used to ships, but not to ships that travelled alone. A state of war existed. Their own ships ventured in and out of harbour only under convoy. Even the fishing vessels did not put out singly, but sailed, like a squadron of water-beetles, tiny and trim in orderly formation under the protection of a destroyer. So that a ship which sailed alone would be remarked, and she aroused much speculation along the harbour wall.

Nevertheless it was brave to see her. The city was

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

used to vessels coloured a dingy grey or variously striped in muddy blue and green for purposes of camouflage. But this ship was under sail, and her sails were white. Like a white bird flying out of the sun she came, until each rope, each spar, each individual body on deck or aloft seemed to the watchers at once distinct and artificial as parts of a spectacle composed for their admiration. All day there were people to watch her, and when the sun sank she lay at anchor in the bay. The proper officials had boarded her with the proper forms; enregistered and examined, she was yet unchanged by these officials, but lay there, timeless, not to be docketed or defined in time and place. *Of course, you felt, she has visited us before and will again; under whatever name and sailed by whatever crew she will come again.* But these feelings are not officially recorded, and it is from the official records that we know her name, the *Worcester*, an independent vessel trading with the Indies, her owner, Thomas Bowrey of London, her captain, Thomas Green. She had put into harbour for refuge and revictualling; she was to be attached, it was noted, to the next convoy sailing south. Meanwhile she would lie where she was for some days.

‘She will be here for some days, it seems,’ said Mr Roderick Mackenzie. ‘Did you notice how white her sails are?’

‘They are white certainly.’

ARRIVAL

Mr Mackenzie was at his ease in the tap room. He was a little jocular man, much liked in the city and much respected. Bristling and rotund, high-complected with dark hair rapidly thinning, and a pair of spectacles that he wore only professionally (so that now they lay encased in the jacket pocket of his tweed suit), he enjoyed the reputation of a sharp, sound man of business and a good sport. You knew where you were with him. This was usually, as on this occasion, at some public place of hospitality, for Mrs Mackenzie did very little entertaining, and he a great deal; many of his acquaintance did not even know he had a wife at all. Indeed, he was more frequently to be found at a tavern than at his office, for the Trading Company to which he was Secretary had been badly hit by the war, and the unsettled times. Had he not, by prudent investment, enjoyed a private fortune, he might have found some difficulty in maintaining the scale of his hospitality.

'I was in conversation,' Mr Mackenzie said, 'with the Customs officers. It seems that she has been in trade with the Indies.'

'A competitor?'

'You might say so. I wonder that she has not suffered the same hazards that have destroyed our own vessels.'

'Perhaps she has.'

'If so, she shews no sign of it.'

'Might she not be the surviving vessel of a fleet?'

'No,' said Mr Mackenzie, 'She sails alone.' He

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

tapped his teeth. 'That is curious in times like these. Did you notice what white sails she has? They would make her conspicuous, I should have thought, to pirates if not to the enemy. But perhaps she has nothing to fear from pirates.'

'Perhaps not.'

'I should like to speak to her captain. He must be a man of skill and experience to sail alone and so lightly armed, and yet to make port safely.'

'Why do you not pay him a visit?'

'Would you care to join me?'

'I might.'

'Perhaps we should think about that.'

* * *

The moon rose above the ship, which lay, her wings of sails half-furled, pure and distinct in the moonlight and the dark water. Mr Hancock was reminded of a Christmas card of that superior sort which comes with deckled edges. Almost it seemed as if at any moment she might spread those wings and fly, swift and beautiful like a swan in the night, above the watchers at the harbour wall to—No one knew whither she might fly. Many people were watching there, and they stayed for a long time by the harbour wall, watching. But nobody approached the ship, and nobody left her, and eventually the people went away to their suppers, their beds, and the warm taverns.

Then the ship lay alone, double-imaged like a

ARRIVAL

swan beneath the moon, and no wind moved the half-furled canvas of her sails.

'It is strange,' said Mr Mackenzie, 'that none of her crew should have come ashore.'

He had about him by now a club, improvised by the place and the occasion, of pretty fellows, some of whom he did not even know, so gregarious was he by custom at this time of the evening. They sat friendly together at a table of a tavern of the better sort (since Mr Mackenzie did not patronise the waterfront bars), and paid for each other's drinks on a complicated system of politeness that did not allow a public reckoning.

'Their captain probably doesn't want them to wreck the port on their first night ashore,' someone said. 'They've been a long time without women.'

'That is true.'

'I don't see that an extra day on board will make them any the less passionate.'

'Perhaps he won't allow them ashore at all,' suggested an elderly gentleman whose left eyelid twitched violently from time to time. 'After all, they have each other.'

This was felt to be a remark in poor taste, and Mr Mackenzie was quick to set the conversation upon another line. 'I should like someone to come ashore,' he said. 'If they have been in trade with the Indies, it would be good to have news of our own poor boys.'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

The *Speedy Return*, a vessel owned by Mr Mackenzie's Company, had embarked a long while ago on a voyage to the Indies. She had not returned; it was feared she had been lost. Many of Mr Mackenzie's hearers had invested in this vessel, and they were not slow to follow him.

There was, however, a momentary check. 'Poor boys be damned!' said a swollen man at the foot of the table. 'They crawled from the jails at the promise of a bounty. Who cares for them? But I had money in the *Speedy Return*, Mackenzie, and it was invested by your advice.'

The Secretary felt this to be in worse taste than the other. He wasted no time in excuses. 'Didn't the Hancock boy sail on that vessel?' he asked. 'And your nightwatchman's son, Tavish? Wreck the port or not, there are many in the city who would be glad to give them a dinner and something to drink in return for the hope of news. I should be sorry if they were not allowed ashore.'

'They'll be here a while yet. There's no convoy, surely, until the end of the month.'

'Perhaps they'll not wait.'

'Oh, I should be very sorry, gentlemen,' said Mr Mackenzie. 'I should be very sorry if they were to come to *that* decision.' He drained his glass. 'Did you notice how white her sails are?'

* * *

Mr and Mrs Hancock had put the children to bed

ARRIVAL

and settled down for a quiet evening, she with her knitting, he with the paper, since both were decided that the television was too much of a distraction in the evenings if they wanted to be quiet. They lived in one of a row of coast-guards cottages, their parlour windows facing on to the bay; since passers-by could not see inside, there was no need to draw the curtains. From time to time Mr Hancock would walk over to the window and gaze out at the ship as she rode there in the moonlit water.

'Quite a job getting Hubert off tonight,' he said. 'He was all excited.'

'We should never have taken him to the harbour so near his bed-time.'

'Give the boy a chance. He won't see anything so handsome again for a good while.'

'It's unsettled him,' said Mrs Hancock. 'He's been lonely since Billy went.'

'There's Stephanie.' A careful couple, the Hancocks had decided to gear the increase of their family to the slowly rising income of the Civil Service. This plan had been ruined in its second stage when Mrs Hancock gave birth to twins.

'It's not the same. Billy was all in all to that boy.' Mrs Hancock's hands trembled, and she dropped a stitch.

'Don't say "was", mother. We're bound to hear something soon.' Six months ago, Mr Hancock had been assuring his wife that no news was good news. He himself had ceased to expect his son's return at

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

'about this time, but he tried to keep hope alive in her. And Mrs. Hancock, who had wakened one night in November, and had lain awake until dawn, on her back apart from her husband, listening to the sea and knowing that her son was dead, allowed him this small means to comfort.'

'No, you're quite right,' she said. 'We mustn't despair. Will you close the curtains, father? The moonlight distracts me.'

'So Mr Hancock closed the heavy curtains and shut the ship out of the parlour. Presently he put down his paper, and she her knitting, and they watched the second half of a fifth-rate movie on television before going to bed.'

'Even if they should think of going,' said Mr Mackenzie, 'they have a moral duty to remain.'

'That's true.'

'How can I close my books, how can any of us know where we stand financially while we still have this doubt? If it were a case of murder, there would be no question of our right to force *anyone* with information to state publicly what he knew, in a court of law.'

'Murder?'

'I do not suggest anything as serious as that, of course. There is property involved, however.'

•Liquor had been spilled on the table. The elderly gentleman with the twitching eyelid was engaged in

ARRIVAL

sopping it up delicately with his handkerchief. 'They should be forced to tell,' he said. 'By any means.' No longer caring if he were observed, he squeezed his handkerchief into his glass, and drank the contents.

'There is no question of force,' Mr Mackenzie said. 'No question at all. After all, if they have any information of that kind, they will be glad to impart it.'

'What kind?' Eyes dulled with drinking gazed at Mr Mackenzie from across the table.

'Of any kind.'

'Then why haven't they come ashore?'

'They do not know,' Mr Mackenzie said. 'How can they possibly know of our venture and our interests? Their captain keeps them on board to prevent their wrecking the port. You said so yourself.'

'What if they sail tomorrow?'

'Without a convoy? No, no, gentlemen. They have a dangerous stretch before them; they are bound to wait for a little. I was myself considering whether I should pay a call on the vessel tomorrow. Perhaps you would care to join me. If her crew is not to be allowed ashore, the least we can do, since we share so many interests, will be to make them merry on board.'

The swollen, blunt gentleman did not understand. 'Least we can do!' he said. 'Do you suggest we have a duty to entertain a pack of lousy foreign sailors? We don't know much about this ship, but if she's in trade with the Indies—'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

'Ske is,' said Mr Mackenzie, 'in some sort our competitor. You have hit it, sir, in one.' He refilled his glass from the bottle on the table. 'Nobody suggests, gentlemen, that we should carouse with the foc'sle hands. It was my idea only that we should take with us, in hampers, some kind of a collation with a sufficiency of wine—and a hogshead of strong ale for the men certainly, if Mr. Cooper insists—and that we should pay a call on the officers of the *Worcester*, who deny themselves, after all, what it is expedient to deny to the crew, and with less reason. We must forgo, I think, the company of ladies, but perhaps some of us'—his eyes flickered towards the elderly gentleman, whose teeth tore now at the handkerchief's corner—'might care to dress up. Since these gentlemen are, as Mr Cooper reminds us, our competitors, it will be as well to go armed. But since we intend the visit as no more than a social and hospitable gesture, the arms should be concealed.'

'I have several other friends,' he continued, 'who may wish to join us. I had intended to meet them at eleven o'clock tomorrow morning by the Company's jetty. Shall I see you gentlemen there?'

Outside, they paused for a while on the Promenade to admire the ship. 'White is not a good colour for sails at this time,' Mr Mackenzie said. 'Gentlemen, good-night!'

CAPTURE

'Roderick Mackenzie, Secretary to the Dasien Company, believing the Worcester to be a ship of the hated East India Company, hired some pretty fellows who boarded her disguised as friendly visitors and seized her by force.'

G. M. TREVELYAN, *op. cit.*

IT was Mr Hancock's habit to stroll along the harbour wall at eleven in the morning to take a cup of tea with his friends in the Customs Office, and to spend some time there in conversation. As he passed the Trading Company's jetty, he noticed three small pleasure craft moored to the steps, and into these Mr Mackenzie was stowing the persons and provisions of his friends. There were baskets of food, and other baskets containing bottles, and a hogshead, sure enough, of ale. Pilot Anderson was of the company, Mr Hancock noticed, and a number of other gentlemen of money and prestige, together with some of the younger members of the Old Soldiers' League; it seemed surprising that they should have been able to leave their offices in the middle of the week to go junketing, but no doubt some arrangement had been made. Mr Hancock did not go so far as to decide that this loafing was unpatriotic and a poor example at a time of national crisis, because the crisis was of so vague a nature and had been going on for so long; nobody had seen an enemy for many years, the war being mainly one

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

of attrition and blockade. Nevertheless, he felt a little censorious as he walked on the wall above them. This attitude was not noticed by the passengers of the boats below, however, so Mr Hancock came to a halt and decided instead, to watch what was going on.

The boats set out together. There was some trouble over Mr Cooper's revolver. It is a mistake to wear a shoulder-holster unless you are used to it, and Mr Cooper felt not only uncomfortable, but apprehensive; there was no telling, he thought, whether the gun might not fire of itself. Wanting to sit still, apprehension and discomfort made him wriggle. He tried to feel for the safety catch, caught his thumb in his cellular underwear and rocked the boat. He was then partially undressed by Mr Mackenzie, who took the revolver away and dropped it into the sea.

'I borrowed that gun from my brother,' Mr Cooper said.

'You will not be able to return it, unless you choose to dive.' So complicated a piece of organization had skimmed the urbanity from Mr Mackenzie's manner to his friends, and he was not made more friendly by his distrust of what they would do on board. Cooper was a fool. Most of the others, he suspected, were not brave, though wine might make them so. He observed that, in the furthest boat, the elderly twitching gentleman was about to be ill.

'Mr. Hancock watched the three boats approach the *Worcester*, where, within a cable's length, two of

CAPTURE

them cut their motors, and the third drew closer. In this Mr Mackenzie stood upright, using his cupped hands as a megaphone. 'May I come aboard?' he shouted, but Mr Hancock could not hear him, and walked on along the wall. 'May I come aboard?' Mr Mackenzie shouted again.

'Who are you?'

'Citizens' Welcoming Committee!'

'Citizen's what?' asked Mr Cooper to his neighbour. 'Who did he say we were?'

'Welcoming Committee.' Their title was new to more members of the party than Mr Cooper, for Mr Mackenzie had not thought it wise to confuse them with information. Only the members of the Old Soldier's League had been given exact instructions. The city gentlemen had been told to follow Mackenzie's lead, to behave amiably, and to keep their weapons hidden.

From the ship, a rope ladder was lowered, and Mr Mackenzie climbed up it, to be greeted on deck by a tall young man whose uniform and peaked hat showed him to be the captain.

'So young?'

'I beg your pardon.'

'I am sorry. I had not expected you to be so young a man, Captain—Green, is it?'

'That's right.'

'Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Roderick Mackenzie. I represent—with these other gentlemen you see below there—the Welcoming

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Committee of our city, and, believe me, Captain, we are happy and proud to be able to welcome you to-day.

Here Mr. Mackenzie shook the captain's hand, and the photographer, who had followed him up the ladder, was quick to take a picture.

'We of this city, my dear captain,' Mr Mackenzie continued, 'live by the sea. Literally so. Our whole livelihood is tied up with the lifelines of trade that you gallant sailors, of whatever merchant fleet, risk your lives in keeping open. The war has gone on for so long that some of our first hospitality has gone with it, I fear, but there is still a little we can do, and how glad, how glad and grateful we are to do it. There has been little time to consult you, because we have had no idea when you will be leaving.' They had been walking forward together on the deck, and at this point Green turned to him. 'No, no,' said Mr Mackenzie. 'Do not tell me; I prefer not to know. Careless talk costs lives, as the posters say.'

'I don't know either.'

'You do not? Well, I dare say that the departure of a convoy is kept secret until the last possible moment. Meanwhile, let me assure you that our homes and our tables are open to you and your men at any time. And for today'—Mr Mackenzie's gesture took in the ship, the day, the distant city, the boats below, all past and all possible pleasures—'for today, since you may not come to us, we come to you with goods of our providing. Later, I hope we shall become well

CAPTURE

acquainted if our authorities delay you for long enough; today, let us hope at least to make a start in that direction.'

'You're very kind. It's not exactly regular.'

'My dear captain, if you have any doubts of the regularity of our coming on board, we shall leave at once. I know what regulations are.'

'No, of course not. I'm sorry.' Obviously this was not a regular proceeding. Equally obviously, it would be ill-mannered to refuse. None of the most detailed instructions Captain Green had received, post by post and port by port, from his owners covered this sort of eventuality, but he had been told, he remembered, to avoid giving trouble and offence wherever he called, and certainly there could be no harm in a picnic on board, which, indeed, might in some way console the men for their isolation.

'If it will reassure you,' said Mr Mackenzie, 'let me say that our Committee has done this before for visiting vessels whose crews, for whatever reasons, were not able to take advantage of our hospitality ashore.'

'Really you're very kind indeed.' They had been joined, though at a distance, by the First Officer, whom Green now addressed with a nervous determination. 'Mr. Madder,' he said, 'these gentlemen are a welcoming committee, who have very kindly asked us to lunch. Will you detail a party to help them and their gear on board? I think you may excuse the men from all but routine duties, and warn

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

them to be on their best behaviour. We may have to arrange some conducted tours.' He turned again to Mr Mackenzie. 'You don't want them to sing shanties or anything?'

'No.'

'We had to do that once for a Mothers' Club at Santa Barbara.'

'Nothing like that.'

So the gentlemen of the Citizens' Welcoming Committee began to ascend the rope ladder in turn. They were not all equally skilful in doing so, but nobody fell in. The only casualty was the walking-stick of the elderly twitching gentleman, which, on being dropped, sank at once, but this curious behaviour in a piece of light wood was not remarked by any of the crew.

In turn also, the guests were presented to the *Worcester's* officers—to the captain, the two mates, the surgeon, the supercargo and Mr Simpson, who was in charge of the vessel's armament. Since there were so many more guests than officers, Captain Green wondered uncharitably whom all this festivity was most intended to amuse, but he said nothing. The young men from the Old Soldiers' League, however, were patronizingly jovial in setting up the hogshead on the lower deck, and tapping it, and serving it, while the more presentable members of the crew earned themselves tips by taking parties of visitors about the ship; Daniel Stringman, the cook, in particular gave evidence of an imagination quite

CAPTURE

lacking in his cookery with stories of battle, hurricane, sudden flights and secret islands, all of which, Green assured Mr Mackenzie, were untrue, for it had been the quietest of voyages.

'That must have been as well,' Mr Mackenzie observed, 'for I noticed that you carry little in the way of armament.'

'We have what the regulations require, sir. Besides, we're faster than most other vessels—or at least, I think so.'

'I am sure that is true. Yet I notice that your men do not even wear side-arms. I speak as a civilian, but is that wise in time of war?'

'Well, we don't mount guard in a friendly port, sir. As a matter of fact, there are some of the men whom I wouldn't care to trust with a rifle, even if they were sober, let alone today when most of them are likely to be a little merry, thanks to your generosity. But I expect you'll have noticed the armoury on your tour round the ship.'

'That would be the locked door before which, now you remind me, I recall observing some sort of a sentry.'

'Ballantine? He's not a very frightening figure, I'm afraid, but we're not in the navy, after all; we have to use the best we can get.'

'Oh, my dear captain, I intended no slur. Let me assure you that he frightened *me*. Poor fellow, he must resent having to stand guard when his ship-mates are enjoying themselves.'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

'He'll be relieved, you know.'

'Yes,' said Mr Mackenzie, 'I am sure he will.'

* * *

When the job was done, it was neatly done. The problem had been to concentrate most of the crew in one place, and this had been achieved in part by the stationary nature of the hogshead, in part by the poker and crap games organized by the members of the Old Soldiers' League. The conducted tours were over, and those members of the crew who were not gambling had gathered about an Old Soldier who had brought his concertina. They sang old songs wistfully and sailors' songs zestfully; it would have warmed the Mothers of Santa Barbara to hear them. Conducted or not, however, the visitors had by now become dispersed all over the ship, and one of them would usually be found talking to the sailor at the armoury, who never discovered what was going on, and remained faithfully at his post to the end.

Mr Mackenzie's aim in inviting so many of his business associates had been in part perhaps to cow resistance with their numbers, but largely because he had wished to spread responsibility in case his plans should fail. For the execution of these plans, he relied on the young men of the Old Soldiers' League, and these he had most comprehensively briefed. Between five minutes to four and four o'clock, their part of the operation was over, and

CAPTURE

the crew of the *Worcester*, puzzled and tipsy, were aligned three deep on the lower deck, effectively covered by the pistols of these dedicated young men. Only one sailor had resisted. He had been ahead in the poker game, and resented its breaking up. One of the Old Soldiers had held his arms, while another hit him from behind with the butt of a revolver. He had made no more trouble.

At four o'clock Mr Mackenzie remarked easily that they must go. It had been a very pleasant party, but the evenings were shorter than one supposed, and there was much to do before nightfall. Perhaps Captain Green would care to have his men tow the *Worcester* into the Company's dock; it was so short a pull. Mr Anderson was of their party, a most experienced pilot, and knew the harbour well. The captain himself might like to stay below. Mr Anderson could manage without him, and he seemed, if he would allow Mr Mackenzie to say so, to be looking a little seedy. Such a combination of rich foods might be expected to disagree with the stomach of a man for so long accustomed to the more spartan shipboard fare.

Green stared at him across the bottles and chicken bones. 'I don't understand,' he said.

James Simpson, the gunner, stood up. He was a fair, direct man, at his best in an emergency. 'It's piracy,' he said, measuring with his eye the distance to the door. 'You're too fat and middle-aged for this game, Mr Whatsername.'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

'Piracy?' said Green. 'In port? In a friendly port?'

'Why no,' said Mr Mackenzie. 'Not piracy. This is a perfectly legal undertaking. You may call it, a form of distraint. My Company has a number of claims against your own, and we have chosen this way of enforcing payment.'

'Company?' said Green. 'We're an independent vessel. My owner acts for himself. There is no Company.'

'No? No doubt you will be able to put it to the proof. I have a copy of the injunction with me, if you care to inspect it.'

He took a document from his pocket, and handed it to Green. 'And as for being fat,' he said, 'why so I am. And middle-aged also, as your young friend has been pleased to observe. And unarmed, unless you would care to call this small piece of legal paper an armament. But the first of you gentlemen who leaves this cabin without my permission will be shot. We shall say that you were resisting a legal officer in the execution of his duty. So I recommend that you should bide quiet where you are. You will be quite free, when we have berthed the vessel, to go wherever you wish and to seek whatever legal advice you may need. We intend no harm to your persons. Remember that, and be wise.'

He left the cabin, and shut the door behind him; one of the Old Soldiers took up his station outside, but the door remained shut. Two other Old Soldiers told off a detachment of the ship's crew, and, fuddled

CAPTURE

and incredulous, they lowered two boats and towed the *Worcester* to the Company's wharf. There the ship's guns were dismounted, and so remounted on shore as to leave her helpless under the threat of her own ordinance.

But Mr Mackenzie was conscious that this alone was not enough. "There is too much canvas about," he remarked, "for a ship in this condition." Three of the Old Soldiers who were, in fact, Old Sailors, performed one more task, therefore, and the white sails of the *Worcester* fell heavily to the deck.

III

RUMOURS

'For four months the crew of the Worcester had been banging about the public houses of Leith and Edinburgh. . . . Their idle words dropped into the deep soil of Scottish suspicion, and fructified there like dragon's teeth. The patriotic feeling of the moment . . . seized upon their hints to construct a charge of piracy. . . .

A Scottish ship, the Speedy Return, had long been missing, and the rumour was spread that Green had met her somewhere in the Indian Ocean, pirated her, and murdered her captain and crew. . . .

G. M. TREVELYAN, *op. cit.*

Now began a time of inactivity for the captain and crew of the *Worcester*. Their ship lay imprisoned in the harbour. Skeletal, stripped of her canvas, she did not gain in dignity like a tree in winter, but began, it seemed, to grow a little dingy, a little soiled. A small detachment of men remained on board under Madder, the first mate, to scrub the decks, and maintain such a guard over her cargo as the port authorities, with a nice sense of legality, insisted on. The others found lodging in the town itself.

Some went to the Y.M.C.A. hostel, a high gaunt building in a side street off the shopping centre, its lower floors all amenities, its upper floors a coral of tiny individual bedrooms with self-locking doors. These sailors were the quiet ones of the crew. They read the magazines and newspapers in the Reading

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Romp. They wrote letters in the Writing Room, watched television in the Television Room, listened to the muted public address system in the Study Room, hovered on the outskirts of the Saturday Night Dances, sat in the back row at Evening Lectures, and were goggled at by middle-aged businessmen in the Swimming Pool. They were very bored. At the end of two weeks, most of them left clean sheets and institution living for the rougher, but cheaper arrangements of their mess-mates.

For all the sailors found the subsistence money allowed them to be an inadequate support for their enforced idleness. Most of them kept their sea-chests on the ship, and slept where they might in cheap dormitories. They were usually to be seen in one or other of the water-front bars, often unshaven, often a little quarrelsome, drinking and making free with the free lunch.

Because of the circumstances of their detention, the sailors did not feel easy before the local people; they felt themselves the subjects of a practical joke that had gone on for too long. They became sensitive to stares, to silences, to conversation in lowered tones, or behind a hand. Most of them adopted a defensive surliness of behaviour, swaggered self-consciously, and made remarks designed to be overheard. They made few friends in the port, spoke to few people, indeed, but bar-room spongers. To these the crew of the *Worcester* talked in exaggerated terms of high adventure, of battle and blood, of their

RUMOURS

strength and their seamanship, of exotic cargoes and strange encounters in the southern seas from which they came.

Captain Green did not understand how it could be legal for his ship to be seized in this way, and he went to pay a call on his consul.

He was surprised to find the consulate in a semi-detached house in a residential suburb to the north of the city. A brass plate by the side of the door assured him that he had come to the right address; in the window, a card read simply, 'CORSETIERE'. He rang, and the door was opened by a middle-aged lady of respectable appearance.

'Is the consul at home?' Green asked.

'No, dear,' the lady said. 'He just stepped out a moment to get the vedge. He won't be long, if you'd like to wait.'

She took him into the drawing-room. 'I expect you'd like a cup of tea while you're waiting,' she said. 'I'm just having one myself, so it won't be any trouble.'

Seated at the window, sipping strong tea, Green was well situated to observe the consul's arrival. He was an elderly man, discreetly dressed in a dark suit, curiously burdened with a large brown-paper bag and an umbrella. He went round to the side of the house. Green could hear conversation and the sound of the umbrella's being placed in a corner of

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

the hall, and falling over. The consul entered the room as if he were not sure he owned it.

—‘You’ve come to see me?’ he said.

Green introduced himself.

‘You’ve been robbed, I expect,’ the consul said. ‘Or assaulted. Or robbed *and* assaulted.’ He stood before the empty hearth. ‘My dear fellow, it’s always happening. The police used to call me up about it, but there was never anything I could do, so they stopped calling.’

‘It’s not that exactly,’ said Green.

‘Then it’s money. I don’t know why everyone who finds himself without money in a foreign port always imagines he can get some from his consul. It’s quite illusory. This is not a well-paid Service, you know; not with the exchange against us. It’s difficult enough for me to manage for myself, let alone for every sailor who’s lost his wallet.’

‘Yes, I noticed the sign.’

‘Sign?’ The consul’s glance took in the card that read ‘CORSETIERE’. ‘My wife,’ he said uneasily, ‘is very clever with her hands.’

‘I dare say it all helps.’

‘Makes filling up the tax returns a difficult business,’ the consul said. ‘One daren’t say nothing about it, you know.’ There was a writing-desk by the small side window. He sat self-consciously before it, and opened a drawer. ‘Well now,’ he said, ‘what exactly did you want to see me about?’

RUMOURS

Green told what he knew of the happenings of the day before.

'Very strange,' said the consul. 'Very strange and out of order.'

'*Can* they do this sort of thing?' Green asked. 'That man Mackenzie said his Company had a claim against us. But they can't enforce a claim on their own like that, surely? With guns and all that! It's piracy.'

'Piracy!' The consul turned his head like a startled canary. 'My dear young man, you mustn't use words like that here. It'll get us all into trouble.'

'Well, isn't it? Besides, the claim wasn't against my owners at all. As far as I can make out, the East India Company in London seized a ship belonging to Mackenzie's people, and the case went to court, and Mackenzie's lot lost their ship. It was something to do with their infringing the East India monopoly. And now Mackenzie has taken our ship as a sort of reprisal. Even if that were a legal action in itself, it couldn't be justified against us. My owners have nothing to do with the East India Company. We're infringing the monopoly ourselves; Mackenzie ought to regard us as friends.'

'Yes,' the consul said, 'I see.' He had a clean sheet of paper in front of him, and he wrote on it, '*East India Company. Monopoly. Not.*', and drew some curlicues underneath. 'And your name is?' He wrote that down too, and the name of the ship, and the names of the owners. Then he put the paper away in a drawer.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

'It all seems quite simple,' he said. 'As soon as it can be proved that you are who you say you are, the whole case falls to the ground, and they'll have to let you go. Until then, you had better stay here. Not in this house, of course, but I am sure that you will be able to find lodgings. It may be all for the best; you would have had to wait for a convoy in any case. Meanwhile, I don't see that there is anything I can do, except to report the matter.'

He took another sheet of paper from the drawer, and wrote on it a name and address. 'You may need a solicitor,' he said. 'When people get charged with drunkenness or picked up in disorderly houses, I usually advise Mr Coventry.' He stood up, and held out his hand to be shaken. 'I expect you'll want to be getting along now,' he said. 'You were quite right to come and see me.'

As Green walked down the path of crazy paving that divided the front lawn, the consul leaned out of the drawing-room window. 'Don't forget to keep in touch,' he shouted. 'It's a Number Eleven bus to the centre of town.'

* * *

When the other members of the ship's crew left the Y.M.C.A., the surgeon, Charles May, stayed on. He was a clubable man, a joiner, unfitted to the solitude of a life at sea, and he found in the 'Y' the good-fellowship his spirit craved. A man never needed to be bored there. It was a poor sort of man, of course, who ever would allow himself to be bored,

RUMOURS

with the world so full of so many things, and yet, during the long voyage, Mr May had often been very bored indeed, and this had frightened him. During these times, he had suffered alternate periods of frightening lassitude (when he ate too much and grew fat—a man ought to keep in condition) and of anxious moving from one person to another in a series of inane and unwelcome conversations.

But now, everything was all right again. A man ought to keep in condition: Mr May exercised daily in the gym, and met some friendly people there who gave him tips on building himself up. He realized he had been neglecting his chest development, but in what seemed no time at all he had remedied this, and was well on the way to acquiring a good overall muscular control. And a man ought to keep his mind supple by meeting and talking with all kinds, and Mr May went out of his way to meet people and talk to them, and he took part in all sorts of valuable evening classes and talks—on hypnotism, and sketching from life and what all. And from being willingly organized, he became an organizer. Discussion Groups do not arrange themselves, after all: you have to have a Leader, and you have to have someone go round to all the newcomers' rooms to get them to attend.

In almost no time, Charles May was so accepted around the 'Y' that most of its members had forgotten he was a member of the *Worcester's* crew at all. This was as well since, when some of the sailors be-

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

came involved in fights around the port, Mr May's friends were provoked by what they heard of such affairs into speaking their minds pretty freely. But Mr May took no offence. He had a great aptitude (for anything so unconscious could hardly be called a skill) for adapting his own prejudices to those of the people in whose company he happened to find himself, and he no longer thought of the sailors as his shipmates.

So that, when speakers from the 'Y' were wanted for a Rotarians' Luncheon, it was agreed that May, who knew more than anyone else about the current programme and plans, should represent the fellows. His speech was friendly, forthright, and not too long. A great many businessmen whom he had never seen before came up and shook him by the hand and spoke a few words to him, and among them was Mr Mackenzie. That was the beginning of an acquaintance that could soon, when Mr Mackenzie was so hospitable and Mr May so acquiescent, become as warm a friendship as either man was capable of making. Mr May saw less and less of the fellows at the 'Y', and more and more of Mr Mackenzie's evening circle at the better-class taverns. His practice of spartan living fell away under these new conditions, and he would also have found some difficulty in paying his share, had Mr Mackenzie not been able to find him occasional part-time employment and to lend him money.

RUMOURS

James Madder sat in a theatrical bar, alone on a high stool, and sipped his drink. It was lunch-time. He moved a dish of crisps and a dish of pickles to the side of his glass, and watched, in the mirror behind the bar, the people beside him.

To his left a loud man talked with a quiet man, the loud man the larger of the two, the quiet man the better dressed. Indeed, the loud man was not prosperous. Madder noticed that the handkerchief in his breast pocket, his tie and his hat were equally discoloured, and the line of his collar at the neck was dirty.

'Talking Duck?' said the quiet man, 'You mean it says words?'

'That's right, old boy,' the loud man said. 'Goes quack. Ask it anything, Counts. Does sums. Sings the National Anthem. Anything.'

'Sounds a limited act.'

'No limit about it, old boy. Talking Duck just pulls them in. They'll eat it.'

'I shouldn't be surprised.'

'No, really.'

'How do you make it talk, anyway?'

'Talks natural,' said the loud man. 'It's a talking duck.'

The quiet man said nothing, but he lit a cigarette without offering one to his companion.

'Well, it's natural in a way,' the loud man said. 'Sort of natural reaction. You take the duck, see, about two months before you want it, and you

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

squeeze its parson's nose. *Hard. Hurts the duck; makes its butt sore, see. Then you tickle it up after that twice a day. Every time you touch the place, duck quacks. After a bit, it doesn't hurt any more, but the damn fool duck's used to it, and quacks anyway. Then when somebody asks a question—'*

'But surely the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty—'

'Cruelty can't touch you, old boy. No cruelty involved. Doesn't hurt the duck to touch its behind. All the cruelty took place two months before the act.'

'I see.'

'Pulls them in.'

'I'll think about it,' said the quiet man. 'It's not easy to fit a talking duck into the Destruction of Carthage, but I'll think about it. Ask your agent to call me up some time. You can't rush into a thing like this.' He took his hat from the counter, and began to go. 'Better still,' he said as he reached the door, 'I'll call you.'

'Lousy mean bastard,' the loud man said to Madder. 'He won't call. He's probably on his way now to buy a duck and try it out for himself.'

Madder did not reply.

'I should have kept my mouth shut,' the loud man said. 'I should never have told him about that duck. You can't trust anyone nowadays.'

'No, you can't,' the barman said. Madder said nothing.

RUMOURS

'I've been in show business all my life,' the loud man said, 'and, my God, I'm sick of it. You fight, and struggle, and the money you get for it all wouldn't keep a squirrel in peanuts. I used to run a squirrel once,' he said confidentially. 'Took it round children's parties. But I had to give it up. Too expensive.' He emptied his glass, and looked sideways at Madder. 'You wouldn't believe the stories I could tell you,' he said.

'Maybe not, said Madder, 'I'm sorry, I have to go now.' He left the bar without looking back.

'No need to be rude about it, old boy,' said the loud man. 'Who does he think he is?' he asked the barman.

The barman said, 'He's been in here several times lately. Never speaks.'

'Something damned odd about him, old boy. A man isn't as rude as that unless he has something on his conscience.'

'He's off that ship,' said the barman.

'I don't care if he's come down from Heaven to save the world,' said the loud man. 'There's no reason to be unpleasant. He'll find himself in trouble if he goes on like that.' Regretfully he counted out the money for another beer. 'We'll be hearing more of him, I shouldn't wonder.'

Time passed. Captain Green found lodgings with Mrs Bartlett, a widow, whose aim, she said, was to

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

make him real comfortable, and surprisingly she did. She fed him liberally with orange juice and green salads for his health, and tried to induce him to accompany her to the First Church of Christ Scientist on Sunday mornings.

On just such a Sunday morning, their first in the town, George Haines, the steward, a regular church-goer, caught the eye of Miss Anne Seton, whose mother let lodgings on the headland. Next Sunday, he determined, he would find a seat beside her.

James Madder remained on board ship. James Simpson, the gunner, took a room on the outskirts of town, and was seen infrequently. The crew began to split up into groups of mates, and to conduct their public life in different places. From all such groups, the two Indian-Christian galley-hands were excluded, and these would sit for long stretches of time, wrapped up against the cold, on the harbour wall, and gaze at the fishing vessels. They slept in the galley on board, for the Sailors' Home refused admission to coloured people.

Green went daily to the offices of the solicitor to whom his consul had recommended him. He wrote long letters to his owners, telling them of the lack of news. He did not know that Mr Mackenzie had already been advised that the case would not stick, and was casting about for some way to detain the *Worcester* further. 'For they have an odd snack about them,' said Mr Mackenzie, 'and it would be a pity to let them go, only to find—'

RUMOURS

‘What?’

‘That we should not have done so, Johnny,’ said Mr Mackenzie. ‘That it was a mistake.’

‘Mistake or no,’ said his man of law, ‘there are no grounds for holding them. You’ve done rashly enough as it is, Roderick. You’d be better to try getting out of it with grace.’

‘Only hold on a while longer. I have my own ways of getting out.’

‘You’ll need to pay compensation.’

‘For what?’ said Mr Mackenzie. ‘For what? For letting them keep decent folk awake with their water-front brawling? There are strange stories about, Johnnie; there’s some curious talk. We shall do well yet to hold that ship where she is. You saw the reports on her cargo?’

‘Yes.’

‘Not very much, was it, for a two years’ voyage? Tapioca root and calico. Where did they go during those two years? Whom did they meet? You saw she was armed?’

‘All vessels carry a pop-gun or so these days.’

‘All vessels travel in convoy, but this did not. There was a ship of ours, Johnny, carried a pop-gun also, but we have not seen her. She would have brought us more than tapioca root.’

‘What are you hinting at?’

‘I am hinting at nothing,’ said Mr Mackenzie. ‘I am saying that this ship has brought very little in cargo from so long a voyage. I observe that her men

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

are lawless and dissolute. And I observe that she is armed. We should think about these things before we allow her to go on her way.'

It is true that there were brawls.

Sitting in a tavern in the early afternoon, three parts drunk, George Haines said, 'I desire my sister.'

'Go on!'

'It's not psychological or anything,' he said. 'I really desire her.'

'He's off again.'

'A smashing girl she is. You ought to see her, all tarted up in her uniform. When she comes into the room, sometimes I want her so much, I have to leave.'

Daniel Stringman said, 'They've got a name for that, George. It's incest. There was some lord went in for it in a book I read.'

'Don't have to go to any books,' said the seaman, Linstead. 'You can read all about it in the Sunday papers.'

'You haven't seen thy sister,' Haines said. 'Here, I'll show you her photo.' He opened his wallet, and took from it the thin square photograph of a handsome girl in policewoman's uniform. 'You see!' he said. 'It's only natural for me to be gone on her. There's lots of men the same. The bitch!'

'Watch it, boy.'

'Well, so she is a bitch,' Haines said. 'Leads them

RUMOURS

on, and doesn't give nothing in the end. If she did, I'd kill her.'

'Kill your own sister?'

'I'd cut her throat, the cow.'

'Who, *you*?' said Stringman. 'You couldn't cut your way through a rice pudding without fainting if it bled.'

'Me? Faint? Did I faint when—'

'Cut it out, Georgie.'

'You're creating a bad impression, George,' said Daniel Stringman, accenting each syllable solemnly as if it were a separate word. 'You will make these good people believe that you are the dev-il of a fellow.'

'Good people, eh?' Linstead spoke confidentially to a stranger at the next table, leaning over so far to confide in him that the chair was in danger of falling, and Linstead only kept himself steady by gripping the stranger's upper leg. 'Now there'll be trouble,' he said. 'There's always trouble when Dan starts getting parsonical.'

Indeed there was trouble already. The paper tablecloths, the crumbs and the cheese-rinds, glasses, bottles, all slid to the floor as Mr Stringman tilted the table, and stood up. 'Now *I*,' he said sonorously, 'I am the dev-il of a fellow in honest truth. Not one of your milk-and-water boys, Georgie. I'll slit you a throat so neat you won't notice it. If there is anyone as wants his throat slit,' said Mr Stringman, 'I would be pleased to do it and oblige, being a cook by trade.'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Nobody answered him.

'Then we will be on our way,' said Mr Stringman. 'Come with me, Georgie, and I'll give you some lessons.'

'Someone ought to pay for those glasses,' the waitress said.

'My friends will pay,' said Mr Stringman. 'If I have any friends in this lousy bar, which I am beginning to doubt.' He picked his way theatrically to the door, followed by Haines and Linstead, who could be heard to say, as they left the place, 'You want to be careful, Dan. You'll get us into trouble.'

'That's for sure,' said the journalist at the next table. 'Who are they, anyhow?'

'Sailors off that ship.'

'Some characters!'

His companion said, 'I wouldn't like to meet that little one in a side-alley on a dark night.'

'You let me catch you meeting anyone in a side-alley on a dark night, honey,' said the journalist, 'and I won't leave much for the sailors.'

'Roughs!' the waitress said, sweeping up the broken glass. 'There's been nothing but trouble since that ship put in here.'

'It's an ill wind,' said the journalist. 'It all makes copy. I liked that bit about slitting throats.'

* * *

'The Hancocks usually retired early, so that when the telephone rang at one o'clock one night, Mr

RUMOURS

Hancock had to get out of bed and go downstairs to answer it.

'You read that piece in the paper today?' a voice asked. 'About those sailors in that bar?'

The story, facetiously reported, had been given some prominence. Mr Hancock admitted sleepily that he had, and wondered sleepily why anyone should ring him up at that time of night to ask such a question. 'Who is it speaking?' he said.

'Just a friend,' said the voice. 'Just one of a group of citizens that wants to see right done here in this town.'

'Oh.'

'We think there's something every citizen of this town ought to know,' said the voice. 'These sailors off this ship are acting in a very funny way, mister. There's some talk they may be pirates. If that's so, they ought not to be let go, and it's the duty of every citizen to do something about it. That's the way we feel down here. We just thought we'd tell you. Good night.'

That was the end of the conversation. Mr Hancock, a little worried and distressed, returned to bed.

At the same time of the same morning, Daniel Stringman was discovered by a frontier official asleep in an empty wagon of a goods train. Drunk the night before, he had chosen the wagon as a good place to sleep: it had straw and solitude. He did not

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

wake when the wagon was made up, with others, into a rake, did not wake when an engine was attached, did not wake when the train moved away from the city into the grey, sleeping countryside. It took the boot of a hostile official to wake Mr Stringman. His mouth felt soiled and porous like pumice-stone, and he was not polite. He knew nothing, he said, of any frontier: he demanded to be returned to his ship.

'Be telling me next you weren't trying to get away,' said the official, 'I know your sort.' Here, Bob,' he said to his colleague. 'Here's a feller *demands* to be returned. You just see his demands get satisfied will you?'

So Mr Stringman was put under arrest, fined, and returned to the city.

* * *

The headland was a favourite walking place of a Sunday afternoon. The city's housing estates had not climbed so high, but had spread up the shallower rise of the land to the north-east, and the cottages of the headland were sparser and older, though inhabited now mostly by commuters. But Mrs Seton was not a commuter. She owned little but her cottage, of which she let two rooms profitably to an elderly couple living on an annuity.

A pleasant address and his boyhood habit of churchgoing had commended George Haines to Mrs Seton and her daughter. On the Sunday after he had

RUMOURS

first seen her in church, he and Anne walked hand in hand on the headland, while Mrs Seton at home set the table for tea.

They walked hand in hand, and George struggled for things to say. An inexperienced wooer, he had been coached by Mr Stringman, who was not a reliable mentor. It was Stringman, bored and seeking diversion, who had encouraged the encounter, Stringman who had sat up with him half the night, telling him stories and feeding him with lurid technical advice. 'You must make her believe you are a man of the world,' he had said, but it was not the man of the world who, once they were out of sight of the cottage had put out his hand to be held. That had been a perplexed, almost instinctive gesture, and the response it had received had not been a surrender to masterfulness, but an almost sisterly inclination to comfort.

Since then he had said, 'Nice up here, isn't it?' and she had replied, 'Yes, it is.'

They walked on, and the sun shone on them. George asked if she walked here often. Anne said she did, but usually by herself. They stopped, and looked out to sea, George said it was funny how far out you could see on a clear day, not that there was anything to look at of course, and Anne said that the air was good for her mother's asthma. George had an aunt with asthma, he said; it was supposed to run in the family like, but he didn't suffer from it himself, not even from hay fever, the two things, so he'd heard, often going together. Anne said quickly

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

that she was never ill; she couldn't bear sickly people.

For a time, a dog followed them. They wondered who owned it. George's father'd had a dog that did tricks, but it had to be put down when it grew old and smelly. There were strange beasts on the Indian coasts, he said, she wouldn't believe. He described to her the horned black buffaloes, knee-deep in mud, the vultures perched about the body of a dead peasant, taking it decorously in turns to tear at his vitals, the strange night-cry of jackals, the flying-foxes upside-down in trees—George had not been able to spend many days ashore on the Malabar coast, but he remembered much and exaggerated where he could not remember. They were still talking of the voyage when they returned to the cottage for tea.

And, over the toast and scones and dark fruit cake, George went further. He was not used to commanding attention; it had not happened on board. Soon his stock of experiences was exhausted, but he could not stop. He began to imagine, and, imagination failing, to hint.

'It's a hard life, the sea,' said old Mr Huddlesdon, and George agreed significantly.

'Need to be able to look after yourself, I dare say,'

'Ah,' said George, 'If I was to tell you some of the things. . . .'

'Ooooh, George!'

'It's not like this, you know. Lawless like . . . the sea . . . it's each for himself, as you might say.' He

RUMOURS

remembered Mr Stringman, and took some raspberry jam in what he hoped was an imitation of the Stringman manner. 'I've had to slit a throat or two in my time, I can tell you,' he said, 'Young as I am.'

'Mr Haines!'

'Well, it's true, Mrs Seton. Kill or be killed; it's the law of life, specially at sea.'

'Law of death, more like,' said Mrs Huddlesdon, 'You ought to be ashamed to say such things.'

'Oh I *am* ashamed,' George said quickly, 'There's times I haven't been able to sleep at nights, thinking of what they've made me do. But we have to obey orders, you know. If the captain was to tell me to slit some poor fellow's throat, I should have to do it, even if it was my own brother.'

'A black man's throat,' said Mr Huddlesdon, 'That's different. They're hardly human, after all.'

'Black or white,' said George recklessly, 'they're all the same colour inside.'

'Mr Haines!'

George felt he had gone too far. 'Well,' he said, 'you can't afford to take much stock if it's a matter of him or you.'

'But you wouldn't see any other white men out there, surely?'

'Pirates,' said George, 'It's a great coast for pirates.'

'Pirates!'

'In a manner of speaking. After all, we're all pirates more or less, aren't we? We all want what we can get,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

and do our best to take it.' This was one of Mr Stringman's favourite aphorisms, but it produced a most unhappy effect on this occasion. George could feel the hostility he had aroused, but he did not know how to assuage it. 'Well,' he said weakly, 'aren't we?'

'No, we are not, young man,' said Mrs Seton. 'And I'll thank you not to use expressions like that in this house. If *you* can't tell the difference between pirates and honest men—'

'Maybe you had better look to your conscience,' Mr Huddlesdon said. 'Right is one thing and wrong another.'

Mrs Huddlesdon said, 'I remember the day our own boys sailed—' and began to weep, being thus reminded of the happy day at the harbour, and the waving, and the red dress she had worn, and all the brave young men who had sailed on the *Speedy Return*, whom they had never seen again since that day.

'Perhaps' you had better go, Mr Haines. Your coat is in the hall.' Mrs Seton opened the door, and George, in shame, departed, and only Anne was sorry to see him go.

Mrs Bartlett, buying green peppers with cabbage for cole slaw, stood in line behind a rubicund gentleman in the corner store. The rubicund gentleman had only lately retired from business as a shoe salesman; he found in shopping for the household the

RUMOURS

conversational opportunities which his unemployment would otherwise have denied him.

'Well I'll tell you,' he said, 'We're right behind the minister. We stood up for him all the way.'

'You did?' said the storekeeper.

'We certainly did. He won't lose anything by it. The committee met on Sunday and we decided that whatever was good enough for the reverend was good enough for us, and we certainly didn't want any interference from outside with the way he did things.'

'Like?'

'Well as I see it, there's this difference in baptism, and marriages and such. The reverend, you see, he does his baptisms in—well, in the name of Jesus, damn it, instead of saying "In the name of the Father, Son, and all that stuff". I don't mind admitting that I never noticed before *what* he said—never really listened, you know—I mean, I always say that, provided you're a good Christian, it doesn't matter much what you believe. My boy's a Methodist—chose it himself when he was fifteen, because the church is nearer the north side of town—but he's a member in good standing, and that's what counts, after all.'

'That's right.'

'No, we certainly couldn't let the reverend go for a little thing like that. It cost a lot to get him, but he's been worth it—built the membership right up from what it was, and modernized the buildings inside and

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

out. He's a mighty fine preacher, I'll say that, and a fine example. Why only last week, he was telling about these people off this ship here—'

Mrs Bartlett knew, of course, that her lodger was troubled by his ship's situation, but Captain Green had told her none of the facts, so she shuffled a little nearer the rubicund gentleman to get the benefit of his story.

'He's right up to date, on the ball all the time, the reverend,' said the rubicund gentleman. 'He'll use anything, he always says—a good article in the *Digest*, or something on the radio, anything that'll serve him to educate the people to God. And he was telling last Sunday how the devil could use a man's own friendly instincts to undo him—how you could take a drink of alcohol or a cigarette, just to be sociable, you know, and feel the devil go down your throat like a ravening lion.'

'These sailors been passing out cigarettes? That's not what I heard.'

The rubicund gentleman ignored the pleasantry. 'There's little doubt in my mind,' he said, 'and none in the reverend's. We did wrong to take them into our homes. If thine eye offend thee, cut it out: a rotten apple can infect the whole barrel. You can tell a man', he said, 'by the colour of his coat. It's clear enough to some of us in this town that the men off that ship are not as harmless as they'd have you believe.'

'You mean?'

RUMOURS

'One of them tried to run off, I've heard, and they caught him at the border and brought him back. A man doesn't do that unless he's frightened of what may happen to him. And he wouldn't be frightened unless he had cause for it.'

But the storekeeper had noticed Mrs Bartlett's interest. 'Just a moment, Harry,' he said. 'Mustn't keep the customers waiting while we stand around gabbing all day.' He dealt briskly with Mrs Bartlett's purchases, leaving her no further excuse for lingering by the desk. As she left the store, she saw that the two were once more in conversation, and the storekeeper pointed her out to his friend as she passed the window.

So the rumours gathered and spread.

Linstead and Ballantine, caught up unawares in a dubious stag party were approached by a hairdresser, left precipitately, and the company wondered why. A grumbling sailor, ordered by Maddar to extra fatigue duties, damned Maddar up and down the harbour by every criminal name he could call to mind, and was overheard. James Simpson was discovered by a prying landlady to have a revolver concealed under his shirts. Brawling, magnified by gossip, cast a long shadow. The city people were suspicious of the sailors: the sailors were bored in the city without resources. Hostility fed on hostility, distrust on dislike.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

The crew of the Worcester became conscious that, wherever they went, conversation was muted, fingers were pointed; children, who are ordinarily sensitive to an atmosphere of distrust, would follow the sailors through the streets, watching them for the most part in silence, but suddenly shouting sometimes a phrase of abuse, and running away.

All over the city people were talking of them. The junior executive said to the senior executive, 'Of course, you know me, Mr Hambone, I'm just an ordinary straightforward person. I've never been able to talk soft or flatter people; that's not my nature. I just speak my mind right out, and I must say that I agree with you all along the line. There's something suspicious about these men.'

On the other side of the café table, his face set in the expression of watchful good nature worn by senior executives in public places, Mr Hambone said, 'That's right, Jed. You've got something there.'

The junior executive said boldly, 'The way they've been acting, you'd think they had something to hide.'

'Just what I've been saying myself, Jed.' The senior executive used irony as a weapon. Sooner or later every junior would notice that Mr Hambone was on to him; then his assurance would crack, and he would begin to choose his words clumsily and in fear. The young man named Jed, however, had less sensitivity in this respect than most.

'Why, yes; you were,' he said. 'And, I'll tell you in

RUMOURS

my opinion, it's time the police began to do something about it.'

'I said that too, Jed,' Mr Hambone yawned. He would give Jed another week, he thought, for the confidence implanted by his Business College to break: if it had not done so, he would get rid of Jed.

The rumours spread.

'Why would he have D S tattooed on his arms like that,' said one distraught young lady, 'if it didn't stand for "Douglas Sutherland"? I *know* something's happened to Douglas; I know it.'

'This feller my friend knows—'

'From what I heard, this sailor pulled a knife on him. Jim says he wasn't really frightened at all—just said, "Where'd you get that knife and how many have you used it on?"—quite cool you know—and this sailor ran away down the alley and never came back.'

'A man I know, a very good friend of mine, says—'

'Eat it up, Susie! Every drop! Well dear, I only know what I hear, and that's queer enough. There's no smoke without fire, dear; look at the way they've been carrying on since they came. Mrs Murray's Jim—that's the dark one at the meat counter at Harvey's—well, he was one of those went on board the first day, dear, when they brought her in. There was stains on the deck, he says, that couldn't have come there natural. Of, course, he didn't say anything

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

at the time. Eat it up, Susie—or the pirates'll get you.'

'Always in liquor you wouldn't believe. Why would they drink if they'd nothing to hide?'

'Where do they get their money?'

'One, did you hear, hauled in for indecent exposure; one tried to escape—the tall one, the cook; here's his name in the paper, "Dan Stringman", turned back at the station by Officer Beer (Immigration).'

'Well as I was saying, we live next door—no more for me: I'm driving—lowers the tone of a 'neighbourhood, I always think, when you rent rooms, but she needs the money, so what can you do?—well, just one more then, to keep you company. This feller, Green, he doesn't spend much time in his room, I will say, out at all hours. Quiet, too. Doesn't speak. He's not giving anything away, you know. Old Mother Bartlett, she's gone on him, won't hear a word, but you can't tell me—no more for me; I'm driving.'

'Mackenzie says—'

'I had it from a very reliable source—'

'Went down to interview one of those blacks for the paper: You know they don't do anything but sit on the harbour wall all day. Couldn't get a word out of them. Scared. Of course I wanted news of Drummond and our ship; I knew better than to ask the sailors. All these two blacks would say was "No speak! No speak" Seems to me they've been told to keep their mouths shut.'

RUMOURS

But other people were interested in the two Indian-Christian members of the crew, and they were less frightening than the journalist in their approach.

Mr Mackenzie's cousin, Henry, was a deacon of the local chapel; the cousin's wife, Grace, had a special interest in Foreign Missions. Considered as charitable objects, the blacks, Antonio Ferdinando and Antonio Francisco, took on, as it were, a new colour; Grace invited them to tea with the Ladies' Aid Group, and in this more friendly circle they talked freely.

They were both good Christians, they gave out, and regular in their prayers—Catholics, it seemed, unfortunately, there being no other Missions on that part of the coast. But they had not been treated like Christians on board the *Worcester*. 'They are using rude words to me,' said Francisco, 'and calling me "nigger" and other words not fit for ladies' ears.' For some time after they had been recruited, the sailors had kept them below decks—'confined to galley,' Ferdinando said, 'and put to most noisome duties.' In the Mission he had worked as a clerk and teacher; it had been no preparation for life on the *Worcester*. 'Also,' he said, 'we were ill, and not fit for such duties.'

Soon the deacon entered. He did not allow the ladies to question their guests too closely; it would be unkind to recall so many painful memories. So, when everyone had had enough to eat, the meeting broke up with a hymn, but not before he had offered

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

the Indians, since they had nowhere else to live but on board, the hospitality of his own home; there was a little room above the garage that they might use; perhaps they would like to help with the housework. The offer was accepted at once. They would have many cosy talks, said the deacon, when they had grown to know one another better.

So the two Indians came to live at the house of Mr Mackenzie's cousin, and, as is the way of many Indians in menial positions, they answered his questions as they thought would please him. Mr Mackenzie's cousin was able to give Mr Mackenzie a most satisfactorily lurid account of the goings-on aboard the *Worcester* after the Indians had joined her.

'Will they swear to that?' Mr Mackenzie asked.

'Seems to me,' said the cousin. 'They'll swear to anything.'

'I'll be around to see them then,' Mr Mackenzie said. 'We should not suppress the truth, Henry. We must have it out.'

'Mackenzie says—'

'Did you see the letter in the *Flying Post*?' .

The rumours gathered and spread. Other people besides Mr Hancock answered the telephone during the evening hours to anonymous callers. Out of the talk came a word—'piracy'—if the *Worcester* was not a pirate vessel, there was much that needed explanation. Out of the word came a demand. It was time for

RUMOURS

the authorities to do something, to act, to investigate, to bring the whole suspicious business out into daylight. No honest man need fear investigation; it was a free country.

It was a free country, people said; why were these sailors not arrested? It was a free country; they should be on trial, in prison, put out of the way. For piracy was a menace to freedom, which could not exist until all the pirates were locked up.

In this agreeable climate, Mr Mackenzie sat down to write a letter to the Director of the Bureau of Public Security, and, in due course of time, with other solid citizens of the town, he went in person to the Bureau, taking a petition and affidavits of evidence. The Director, a large white person, read the affidavits and the petition, and he listened while the solid citizens spoke of the public scandal and the danger.

'And your own charge against this ship, Mackenzie?' he asked. 'The civil affair?'

Mr Mackenzie did not wish, he said, to confuse the private affairs of his Company with the public good. He had dropped that charge.

'I do not see that I have any choice in this matter,' said the Director. 'I must proceed on the evidence you have brought me.' On the cover of the petition he drew in pencil the head of a small pig with pointed ears. As the solid citizens watched, he began to shade in carefully a blush on the pig's face. 'Your ladies shall sleep quietly in bed,' he said. 'I will arrange the arrest of these men.' He rang a

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

bell on his desk, and the solid citizens went away.

‘Sarcastic bastard!’ one of them said to Mackenzie. ‘Don’t know why the Council appointed him.’

Mr Mackenzie did not reply, but he looked with some satisfaction at the high square building of the Bureau of Public Security, and at the tall wall and gates of the prison that stretched away and behind at the side of the Bureau.

•

IV

CASE HISTORIES

'What do we know about these people?' said the Director of Public Security. There were three files on his desk, of varying thicknesses.

'This is all we have, sir.'

'Biographies?' He took from the file marked 'Thomas Green' two typewritten sheets, clipped together. 'Not much, is it?'

'We have more on the other two.'

'Hmm . . . born . . . one brother . . . unmarried . . . age twenty-six. . . . It says here his father was a policeman.'

'Is a policeman, sir. Both his parents are living.'

'Father a policeman—brother a lawyer—he seems to come from respectable people at least.'

'I suppose so, sir. We really know very little about them.'

Tom's father, Claude Green, had not begun his public career as a policeman, however.

He was a small-time professional boxer—one of the attractions of a side-show of a perambulant Fair. He would spar a certain number of rounds with one of three partners employed by the same show. During the course of an evening, Local Talent would be invited to try its skill with him. Usually he would knock out the Local Talent; sometimes (since this would always be a popular victory) the Local Talent would knock *him* out, and win a cash prize. Indeed,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

his own start had been made in this way, when, as an ugly ginger boy of eighteen, he had mauled the man who held the job before him; such maulings, as the man grew older, had become more frequent than profitable, and he made way for Claude, who himself never suffered the same supersession, but pulled out at twenty-seven, and opened a Gymnasium in town.

The Gymnasium was only moderately successful, but it would have provided a living, had Sarah Green not taken against it. A rough class of men hung around there, she said, and that was true of course, though Claude was not concerned with their presence one way or another: property and a greater amount of leisure had encouraged in him the wish for self-improvement, and he was getting books from the Rationalist Press. From one of the Gymnasium hangers-on came the suggestion that money might be made by arranging wrestling bouts on Saturday and Sunday nights. The scheme was tried; the takings were encouraging. But boxing, Sarah felt, was one thing—a gentlemen's sport, at least—wrestling was quite another. Claude Green sold out his interest in the Gymnasium to his business partner, and took his Sunday punch to the most reputable profession for which he seemed qualified—the police force. After the hazards and shifts of his training and early service, he and Sarah returned to the village from which they both came: Claude was to live out the rest of his career as the village constable.

CASE HISTORIES

One son, John, had been born to the Greens already, and in the village their second son, Tom, was born and christened. Claude Green did not attend the ceremony, because he had become, by that time, a freethinker and evolutionist; this was partly the result of education, and partly a reaction against his wife's increasingly ostentatious piety. The christening party was small. Besides Sarah and brother John, aged eight, there were only Tom's godparents, Alice and Joe Mathews, his uncle and aunt, who owned a grocer's shop in the nearby town.

Tom himself was quiet, and did not let the devil out of him, they said, by crying as the water brushed his forehead. This was more than could be said for Alice Mathews, who giggled as she handed him over to the minister, and uttered a little scream when Mrs Green stepped viciously on her foot. It was a raw, damp day. John Green watched solemnly for the drip on the end of the Rector's nose to fall and reinforce the sanctity of holy water, but it held to the end, and was wiped away by a handkerchief as grey as the weather.

After the christening, Tom was wheeled back to his parents' cottage, and Alice and Joe stayed for a Christening Tea. Claude was in good humour, and made none of his remarks; all was decorous jollity. It was one of the 'good' days that became increasingly rare as Tom's childhood wore on, and his parents stiffened in their separate attitudes to life.

'In her Person she was Lovely. In the Performance of

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

her Religious Duties, Regular and Exact, without Ostentation or Bigotry.' There is a tombstone in the churchyard at Stratford-upon-Avon that reads so. All but the last four words could have been written of Sarah Green, and in too short a time, the lack of those four words cancelled all the rest. She became a spare bitter woman, ostentatious, bigoted, regular and exact in the performance of her religious duties. As she grew harder, so did her husband—she, regular in church attendance, he exact in the petty duties of his office; she (self-punishing) mended, cooked and cleaned; he (self-denying) went without beer to keep up the payments on his insurance. Duty enfolded them both. In that atmosphere of duty at home and, outside, the attitude of cautious mistrust that lay folk have for the families of policemen, John and Tom Green grew up.

At eighteen, John Green won a scholarship to the University. This was the year that Tom ran away from home for the first time; he had travelled five miles on foot before he was recaptured and brought back. After that he ran away regularly once a year, usually during the summer, when the weather was warm enough for him to sleep out.

As he grew older, he prolonged the length of his absences by odd jobs. He harvested fruit and potatoes, lived for three weeks one summer at a hopping camp, under the care of an elderly alcoholic couple

CASE HISTORIES

who had made hop-picking an annual spree for forty years, and now drank more beer in the three weeks than they could pick the hops for in a year. He worked as a photographer's assistant at a seaside resort during the season; he washed dishes in a number of restaurants. Working in the kitchen of one of these places during the summer of his sixteenth year, he was seduced in the back seat of an Austin by a red-haired widow who sometimes helped out as a waitress. It was a cramped and unsatisfactory experience. His schoolboy theoretical knowledge proving ineffective, she guided him, breathing heavily and taking too obvious a pleasure in his innocence—a pleasure which had its price, however, since, in his *gaucherie* he bit her tongue. He could not, next morning, remember the encounter without remorse, and left that place on the same day without his wages to return home.

Because his return was as regular as his running away, it was as if the umbilical cord had never been cut when he was born, but only grew longer. Wander as far as he might, at any time his mother could wind him in. Love can be frightening, but it is reassurance, too. When the responsibility of his mother's love became too great for him to accept, he ran away—and yet, home was a hiding place; home was safety; if he would only accept that one responsibility, all others would be taken from him.

So Tom's childhood and his school days passed.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

He was not steady, not silent, not determined like his brother. He lacked John's application, and won no scholarships beyond the entrance to the local Grammar School though he read widely in a magpie fashion. Because he had enthusiasm without application, he turned most readily to the imaginative subjects, and was 'taken up' by the English master. Tom's literary influences began, of course, with his mother. At an early age, she had introduced him to the work of Miss Prudence Gripe, whose periodical pamphlets, stinking of cheerful fortitude and understanding, she would buy and give to him as they appeared; they formed the style of Tom's early work. After that, he ran the usual course, from Rockfist Rogan to Adonais, with two side-expeditions into the collected plays of Shakespeare in an edition put out by a daily newspaper and given away free to regular subscribers, and the whole of the Forsyte Saga, which was lent to him by the vicar's wife. The English master, who did not give up easily, talked to him about form and tried him with Auden but that didn't take, and Tom's own verses written in secret and shown to nobody were violent thumping pieces about death and freedom, in which the sweet stickiness of Miss Prudence Gripe stood out like jam on a pantry door.

He was tall and supple; he had his father's strength without his father's heaviness. His eyes slanted up a little at the corners—so—and, when ungreased, his hair was thick and light and a warm brown in colour.

CASE HISTORIES

His mother had kept him at school for longer than was usual, and longer than the family could well afford, for she knew that, when the time came for him to make a living, he could not make it in the village and do well for himself. That time came, in spite of her, and it was settled that he should live with Alice and Jim Mathews in the nearby town, to learn the grocery business by working behind the counter and delivering orders on his bicycle, returning home every week-end by motor bus. That year he ran away two months earlier than usual, but the Mathews were persuaded to forgive him, and you might have seen him there next winter, standing behind the bacon cutter in a white coat with his hair slicked back and his eyes unhappy.

Cecilia Kitchen was the wife of the enthusiastic English teacher who had introduced Tom to modern poetry. A misunderstanding over some jumbo olives led her to transfer her custom from the Home and Colonial to James Mathews, Grocers. As she stood just inside the doorway of the shop on that first day, shaking the rain from her umbrella, Tom, who was cutting cheese, hardly noticed her; much later he was to describe the moment in a poem, but the cheese was mentioned only as, *'The menial task that occupied my hands When my eyes, saw you.'* For her part, she gave her order to Mr Mathews, and thought nothing special of Tom.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

During the next few weeks she came into the shop several times, and Tom made deliveries at the Kitchens' home. Burdened one evening with a large cardboard box containing the week's groceries, he was met at the door by Humphrey Kitchen, who took the box away from him, shook his hand, and invited him to tea on Sunday. Their meeting had been planned, for Mr Kitchen was appalled, as he put it, that a genuine creative talent should run to waste among the sandy sugar of a grocer's counter. 'It comes in boxes now, dear,' Mrs Kitchen said. 'So they don't any more.'

The invitation was welcomed; it gave Tom an excuse for not going home that week-end. He arrived in a blue suit, and ate decorous proportions of cake and buttered toast, while Humphrey Kitchen talked to him about Proust. 'Always been meaning to break a leg, you know,' he said, 'and read the whole lot. What an absolutely spiffing writer he is! Bit difficult, mind you, but I always think that adds to the fun. Reading's more bracing when it's a real challenge. Didn't we find that out with the Metaphysicals?' Tom agreed. During the next month, at similar tea-parties, not always, alas, on Sundays, he found himself agreeing with many other judgments on similar subjects; the enthusiasm that Mr Kitchen brought to literature was not always as infectious as he thought, but it was at least indiscriminate. Cecilia's conversation, was less taxing, and they would speak of the hideous plaster moulding on the ceiling (so

CASE HISTORIES

difficult to get a feather brush in the corners, but it fell off if you vacuumed it), of the window-boxes, of anything at all which would bring him on to the safe ground between the unknown—‘that exciting descent, Green, into the levels of meaning of *The Trial*, which is so much like pot-holing in a way; not as damp, but often much more frightening’—and the world, known all too well, of the village and Mathews, Grocers.

Not that they did not talk sometimes of the shop, but that was when she came in during the day to give the order (always to him now), and then they would gossip together, with private jokes about the customers, and the danger from the brass spool which shuttled overhead between the counters and the cash-desk. And at first he spoke to her as to an older person, not as to his mother, of course, but as if she were an exceptionally jolly aunt, until the innuendo of his colleague at the counter put other thoughts into his mind, and he began to write her poems.

This was a bad time for him. It is easy enough to say or sing that your beloved is always in your dreams, but the dreams of adolescents are not always entirely proper. Shame and self-accusation!—the white lilacs in Tom’s poems developed wounds. They were plucked and trampled to the sound of church bells: it was a period of very confused imagery. He found himself impelled now to touch Cecilia sometimes, as if by accident or without her knowing. His hands,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

which used once to hang easily and relaxed at his sides, were now tight, the fingers always a little hooked. At night he would lie stiffly in bed, reckoning totals, playing imaginary games of soccer, anything to keep himself from thinking of her before he went to sleep.

Sometimes Mr Kitchen was away, and they would have tea together. Once she took him to a concert. They returned to toast and dripping by the fire, and Humphrey was waiting up, and chaffed her about her 'young man'.

It was a silly situation, for there was jealousy behind the chaff. Humphrey was not a happy person. His good degree had not been good enough to get him higher in the academic world than a teaching job in a grammar school. He was one of those men who hang about the fringes of the arts without the talents or energy to make a career of them. Dumpy, his hair thinning, his casual flannel trousers increasingly broader behind, he seemed equally ridiculous when he whipped himself into a feeling of vocation or pitied himself for having sold out to the second-rate. It made him angry and jealous that Cecilia should have taken over his discovery. He felt shut-out, and he became more and more conscious that Tom, however gauche and silly, was good-looking and (which was most unforgivable) young. By ending the situation herself unintentionally Cecilia saved her husband from making himself more foolish than he might have been able to forget.

CASE HISTORIES

It happened thus. Tom, who had never shown his poems to anybody, brought them to Cecilia. She read them, secure and gracious in the great armchair with its handy hessian covers, but she had not Humphrey's catholicity of taste, and, exposed so suddenly to the *mélange* of Gripe and muddled images she began to giggle. 'Tom,' she said, 'you mustn't. Really you mustn't,' and she began to explain to him, tenderly, kindly, with all sorts of encouraging phrases, exactly how bad his poems were. As she talked on, Tom began to notice the lines in her neck, and the enlarged pores at the side of her nose beneath the powder, and the first faint fluff of her moustache. Next day he ran away again from the town, and the grocery, and the little country village, and this time he did not return to mother.

ii

'And Madder?' said the Director. 'Anything on him?' The Arresting Officer spoke a single adjective.

'Well yes,' said the Director, 'but that's irrelevant, isn't it? Though of course we can use it if we have to.'

* * *

Madder was forty, the oldest of the ship's officers—a first-mate without influence, who would never get any higher. But forty years was not old, not really old. He would stare into the mirror, and run his finger along some of the deep lines that marked his

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

face, and he would remind himself that they had been there for a long time: the so carefully quizzical wrinkles, the hard outlines of his upper jaw, the edges of his mouth turned downwards in discontent and anxiety, these were in all the photographs almost from the beginning. It is true that there was no longer any fullness to his face, and far less to his neck, where the tendons stood out, drawn and distinct. It is true that he combed his hair more carefully now than when he was a boy. How many times he had stood before a mirror, combing, combing to disguise the patches of scalp, frightened to lose more hair in the combing, frightened of the wind that would disarrange this so arranged coiffure, frightened to wear a hat because (he had read it somewhere) a hat makes one bald, though in five more years he would wear a hat indoors and out, when there should no longer be any hair to arrange, and he should be old, without disguise or hope, carrying the nineteen years that he had carried already for a further twenty-one into old age and new disgrace.

He had 'come out' at nineteen, but he had known before that what was to happen. On his thirteenth birthday, his parents had told him he was an adopted child; like most birthday treats, it had turned out to be a peculiarly flat occasion. He had received the news so quietly that they had thought at first that he did not understand. Even then he was thinking, *This is not it. This is not what I have been seeking*, and only later, when he had read the books, did he realize that

CASE HISTORIES

perhaps he had been wrong, as children are wrong often enough, and perhaps this had been part of it after all.

Curious how little important was the *geography* of his boyhood and adolescence. Most people remember places and things, a pet animal or a favourite playground: the smell of a cowshed or a fishmarket, a sleazy back street in the rain, the glint of firelight on a copper guard, these can bring back a cloud of childish associations. But almost from the first, Madder seems to have lived inside his head, making how many pilgrimages within the narrow circumference of his skull to find something that was never there.

He met other children and played with them. He went through his schooldays with credit and without distinction. He loved (he supposed) his parents—*did I love them?* he asked himself in the mirror. *What did I feel, what should I have felt?*—no regrets, certainly, when the time came to leave home, nothing at all but the very want of feeling when he heard eventually of their separate deaths, his mother of a cancer, his father peaceably at an Old Folks' Home.

Home? What was home to him? Home was a caravan trailer at first, and then it was this small house in that city, and that house in this, and different schools, and different kids down the street, and different but similar stores to fetch groceries from. No, there was no reason to remember home, no reason to remember for long any place or person of his past.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Only some moments he would remember, and some information; the second gathered from books and overheard conversations. He read a number of self-pitying novels (though he did not greatly care for fiction); he read psychology text-books secretly, their covers disguised in brown paper; and he became deeply interested in the gossip that hung about certain well-known names—but even at that age he did not deceive himself with the persuasion that he belonged to a sacred band of writers, painters, actors, and musicians, or anyone marked out in this way to create more delicately in art what they could never create in the flesh. He had stored the gossip away in his memory, but it held little personal significance for him. He had no talent for any of the arts; on the whole, he disliked them. His talents were of endurance and of manual ingenuity; above all he was diligent.

And the moments; one could not forget the moments. Though they were separated by five years in time, the two occasions when he had tried deliberately to prove his manhood ran together still within his mind as a confusion of shame and hysterical prudery. And he could remember quite clearly the moment at nineteen when speculation and imagining came together in a single conclusion.

He had begun for some time to drop into a habit of solitude, and would take long tours, about the country on foot or by bicycle. During one vacation, he spent a night at a lonely hostel on the moors,

CASE HISTORIES

sharing its facilities with one other traveller, a man in his middle twenties. Both had arrived late from different directions. They cooked together and sat down to eat. Looking up from a piece of fried bread that resisted the knife, he saw the man watching him. Neither spoke. It was a cold, clear night. After supper, he had left the shelter of the hostel and leaned for a while against a wall, looking up at the sky. After a while the man joined him, smoked his pipe out there, made perhaps one or two unimportant remarks: he was an accountant and did some sort of welfare work in his spare time—Madder noticed that he shivered a little against the cold.

When they went in again, the man said, 'Ready for bed?'

'Just about.'

'Is that all the blankets you've got?'

'I'll be all right.'

'Better share my sleeping-bag. It's wide enough for two.'

They undressed in silence, each covertly watching the other. It became a social problem of enormous dimensions to Madder that he did not know whether to take his underwear off or keep it on: he made undressing as slow a business as possible and, seeing that the older man did not remove his underwear, kept his on. Together and in silence, they climbed into the sleeping-bag.

In all the urgencies that followed, he never had either the time or inclination to wonder at the in-

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

congruity, but followed his instinct, and, when they continued their different ways in the morning, he felt neither guilt nor regret, but only a gladness that now the introduction was over, and he knew for certain what he was and what, in time, he must do.

That was in his first year of college. He was a young man, his hair thick, his complexion excellent; the lines in his face were of character and not of age. Youth is most prized in the half-world he had entered; he might have run wild, but he did not. Instead, now that he had found the sharp pleasure that his body could give, he fell in love, and lived for three years in celibacy.

Well, he did not fall in love, quite; that is not the way to describe it. Perhaps it was something that he could have prevented, something that a more active temperament would have taken to the point of triumph or disaster, long before the desire for this single person had become so much a habit as to displace all others from his daydreams. It was his roommate, a boy whom, since they had attended the same school, lived in the same town, he had known and accepted for so long that it was never possible for him to be able to tell at what moment he had said to himself, with a shock that was in large part disapproval, *I am in love with Roy*. And of course it was not possible to tell Roy this, and not possible, though evening and morning his imagination played with

CASE HISTORIES

the ideal idea (sometimes Roy had been liquored-up, sometimes his fancy inflamed by a carefully directed conversation), not possible with calculation to arrange an accidental bedding, because his fear and his disapproval would alike combine to prevent it. Indeed, he did not dare even to place an arm, friendly and casual about Roy's shoulder, for fear that the current of his feeling would in some way flow from one body to the other, turning, he was sure, in Roy to fear and to revulsion.

So that he began to exercise in double-dealing. It was to be prolonged for three years. For three years, himself though of a half-world, he re-entered the whole-world he had before forsaken—danced and dated and pretended to excesses he could never know, frightened always that the conquests of whom he boasted would some day give away his secret that there had been nothing, nothing between them in the cinema and the back seat of the automobile, nothing but the frigid play of fingers, the lips arranged not to communicate desire but to conceal disgust. For three years he did not allow his glance to follow Roy about the room, so arranged his sitting at a theatre that their knees would not touch, forced himself not to ask for details (which Roy gave, indeed, without the asking) of the dance, or the drive-in, or the motel assignation. For three years he daydreamed, for three years he deceived, concealed like L's jealousies and his love, and, at the end of three years, Roy became engaged to, be married.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Graduation was one ceremony; the marriage was to follow it. Roy and he were buddies; who else could be Roy's best man? He moved through the preliminaries of preparation, through the showers and parties, the making of reservations, the hiring of clothes, the purchase of a ring, with the deliberate efficiency of a man engaged in a ritual—which was for him the ritual sacrifice, not of Roy, but of his love for Roy, which could not, he knew, outlast the night-to-night habitual intimacies of marriage, so that he must forgo his former closeness and go away, allowing new friends and new experience to silt over and to bury this old love which must now be killed before it could be buried. He was not as jocose as a best man should be, but Roy made up for him. Roy made up for and to everyone in his jocosity. Roy was determined, it seemed, to enjoy his freedom before he should enjoy his bride. At the stag-party on the night before the wedding, Roy broke two chairs and made a speech, part maudlin and part humorous, which so far outlasted the patience of his friends that they thrust his head into a pillow-case and sat on it, until he hit an usher in the rump. And at two in the morning they went back together to their hotel room, he and Roy, and he put Roy to bed.

He put Roy to bed, wiping his face with a flannel cloth and stripping him of his clothing, and then, more tired than he knew, giving in at last so completely to this long-nursed passion that the surrender was itself a passionless act, he undressed,

CASE HISTORIES

lay down beside him, and pulled up the covers.

'Expecting nothing, hoping for nothing, he put his arms around Roy. The embrace was returned. Oh feller,' said Roy sleepily, 'what a time to pick!'

In the morning, Roy, already washed and beginning to dress, awakened him. 'Let's go,' he said. 'It's late.' He sat down on the bed, and touched Madder's hair affectionately. 'What a night!' he said. 'I guess I owe you an apology: I was pretty drunk.' They dressed, breakfasted, met the ushers, received a further final briefing, arrived at the church, took up position. The congregation arrived. The wedding began.;

He watched Roy's girl walk up the aisle. He watched Roy's face, firm-eyed and collegiate, as she joined him before the altar. He heard the responses, respectful but clear. It was over. He escorted the maid-of-honour to the formal garden in which food and glasses had been set for a reception. He shook hands, made his congratulations, raised his glass to toast the bride and groom. And, as he raised the glass, it moved forward in his hand, almost of its own will, spilling the liquid uselessly on the ground before him.

iii

Winter found Tom Green in a northern port. From now on, he was determined, he would look after himself. His mother might wind the cord as she

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

wished; he had bitten his end of it. Whenever he moved from one casual job to another, he would send a postcard to his brother, and he kept in his wallet an envelope with John's address on it, so that there would be someone to tell if he should die.

Day by day during the winter he haunted the hiring hall in which the sailors of coastal vessels waited for employment. He sat on bare benches waiting for a call, sharing his bread and, sometimes, a piece of cheap sausage with a tubercular Swede who had befriended him. They would sleep, with other sailors, in the covered bandstand of a local park, climbing over the wall at night after the park-gates had been locked. On the first of these nights, the Swede had advised him to keep his wallet, not in the pocket of his jeans, but inside, buttoned up against his genitals. He did not press this advice, since Tom was embarrassed, but next morning returned the wallet he had pickpocketed during the night; thereafter Tom followed the general practice, and felt for the Swede some of the affection and respect due to a mentor. The Swede was not a strong man or a courageous man. He had no children, no dependents of any kind. That Tom should accept him as a protector was a source of great pride to him. When in time employment separated them, he wept, simply and without shame.

Work was difficult to get for Tom, and unpleasant when he got it. He was seasick, and hungry, and, he

CASE HISTORIES

believed, in constant danger. Casual and unskilled, he would be laid off after each voyage in favour of a regular man. At last, he left the sea, turned south and came to a city, where he found work as a waiter from six p.m. to two a.m. in a popular cafeteria. The pay was not high, but he was assured of food at least. In an atmosphere of steam and twice-cooked hash, he mopped tables, conserved the bottled sauces (at least two bottles of Grandfather's Relish could be counted upon to disappear during the course of a night), gathered dirty crockery into a pile, and wheeled it on a trolley to the kitchen.

It was a curious under-world in which he now worked, a night-world, peopled by drifting shiftless unemployables, who would appear, and work beside him for some weeks, and disappear, sinking into what world beneath his world he never knew. Some of these people were tramps, seeking warmth for the winter; they took unkindly to the enforced use of nail-brushes and would soon be dismissed. Chorus boys resting between engagements, university students picking up pocket money between terms, aliens who had found that the professional qualifications of their own countries qualified them, in this country, for no more than this—anyone who, for whatever reason, was incapable of regular work might be expected to work here for a while. At midnight, the cafeteria was a rendezvous for tramps and homosexuals, who preferred warmth and a cup of tea to the cold streets, and whose regular clientèle, after all,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

knew where to find them. Many of the waiters themselves were homosexual, and on excellent chaffing terms with the tarts, but despised the 'trade', conducting their own affairs on a less transitory basis than the one-night stand. It was some time, however, before Tom discovered that the 'Mrs Johnson' of his colleagues' conversation was in fact the pudgy waiter, with greying hair and a complexion like pale damp yellow cheese, who had inducted him, when he was first appointed, into his duties.

Regular wages allowed him privacy; he was able to rent a small room to himself. By saving what he could, he was able to replenish his wardrobe. Since there was very little left over for amusement, he joined a public library, and resumed his old habit of indiscriminate reading. When the weather was fine, he took a book into the park. If it were wet, he sat in the Reference Library with the old snuffling gentlemen who, their coat collars raised, turned dispassionately the pages of society magazines.

One of the assistants in the Reference Library was a young girl. She had serious eyes, and long brown hair worn in a bun at the back. She was lightly freckled, her nose a little snubbed. She moved with great dignity about the library; fetching books and replacing them on the shelves like a little girl playing house. One day she stopped Tom as he was leaving. 'Excuse me,' she said, breathless and determined. 'You're not supposed to take books out of *this* library.'

CASE HISTORIES

Tom showed it to her. 'It's from downstairs,' he said. 'From the Lending.'

She blushed. 'I'm awfully sorry,' she said. 'We're always having trouble, you see. I'm supposed to watch.'

'Do you ever catch anyone?'

'The other girl did. A man. It was awful for her.'

'Awful for him too.'

'Well, more for her really, because after all she hadn't done anything wrong.'

After that, whenever she and Tom saw each other in the library, they would smile, and eventually he asked her to go to the pictures with him on her afternoon off. He learned that her name was Janet, and that she had two brothers. Her father was a doctor. 'My father's a policeman,' he said. 'What a pity!' she said. 'They don't work regular hours either, do they? Daddy's always so tired in the evenings.'

Tom was getting a regular wage, and occasionally he made tips. They continued to go out together to films, and, sometimes on his free evening, to concerts or the galleries of theatres. It was a kind of *New Statesman* friendship—a marriage of the professional and the working classes, in an atmosphere of high-mindedness and classical music with no physical contact whatever, except that sometimes they would hold hands. Even this hand-holding was, for Tom, something that he felt the situation demanded of him, not something that he wanted particularly to do. Janet was not connected in his mind either with

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

the red-haired widow or with Cecilia. He had been lonely, and was not lonely now; their relationship suited him so well that he wanted it to last forever as it was.

She invited him to her home, but her parents were out, and the two of them made tea domestically in a kitchen far larger than any he had yet seen, and drank it there, with a loaf and butter and a pot of jam on a checked cloth. Towards the end of that meal, Janet's mother appeared; she was on a visit of inspection. Tom's appearance, his accent, and his secondary education reassured her. She was happy to make the sandwiches for a picnic that Tom and Janet took together in the country, some three months after their first encounter in the library.

They met at the coach station, and were driven swiftly through the streets of the city, out and beyond the city limits to a place, half-village, half-suburb, where they left the coach and walked together by the banks of a river. Old solid anglers sat there in verdiginous hats, and he and Janet played a game in which they took it in turns to say 'Good morning', and scored points for each angler who replied. Later, they leaned over a bridge, and dropped sticks into the water, and, later still, they left the river bank, and climbed the slope of a field to a clump of horse-chestnut trees, where, just out of the shade, they lay and ate their sandwiches.

"No clouds were in the sky that day; there was nothing in it to hold the eye, but the sun at which no eye

CASE HISTORIES

could look. On the slope below them, a little to the left, cows were grazing, and below again was the line of the river, willow fringed, cut half a mile away by a railway bridge. Tom lay on his back, chewed grass, and looked at the sky. Janet watched the cows, the river, and the bridge.

Presently she said, 'Do you have to be a waiter, Tom? Couldn't you get a steady job?'

Tom said, 'Oh, I don't know. It's an easy life.'

'But it's so—'

'What?'

'Well you never seem to get the evenings off.'

'Fridays.'

'Yes, I know.' Janet had torn a piece of grease-proof paper into small pieces, and was now burying each piece individually with a twig. 'I should have thought you'd be able to find a better job,' she said, 'with your education.'

'Maybe. Don't know what as.'

'You could work in a bank.'

'And get less than I do now?'

'Only at first. Besides, it's more—more respectable somehow. The girls at the library all think you're a student.'

The sun did not leave the sky. The world was not suddenly cold. Nothing like that happened. Tom lay there, and chewed grass, and the realization came to him that all the girls in the library expected that he and Janet would become engaged. He propped himself up on one elbow, and watched a train cross the

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

railway bridge, and he knew that Janet expected this too. 'Perhaps we'd better be packing up,' he said.

They packed the paper and orange peel in the picnic basket, and walked back along the river bank to the bus stop. That night, as he collected the greasy dishes and mopped spilt tea from the tables, he knew why Janet wanted him to change his job. A drunk upset a bowl of hot tomato soup into his own lap, and was hustled out, blubbering and bawling. A woman at the next table was talking angrily to her friend: '... thought he could get it for a rissole and a cup of coffee,' she said, 'but I soon showed him different.' No, this was not an occupation for the son-in-law of a professional man.

He lay awake, and fought obscurely in the darkness with his reluctance. He had not thought of marriage, but if he had, it would have been, he knew, to someone like Janet, some quiet, good-looking demure girl, with serious eyes and a light dust of freckles. Her parents would be able to help him. He would find a job with prospects; he would take evening classes and acquire professional qualifications. It would be a long engagement: they would not be able to marry until he had a secure position and a salary. One year, two, perhaps three before they settled down together in a tiny house with neighbours. And in time his mother would have a grandson.

Next morning, he gave his landlady a week's rent

CASE HISTORIES

instead of notice, and he did not call at the library, and he collected his wages from the cafeteria, packed what luggage he had, and went to find his brother.

iv

The third file looked as if it would be as unrewarding as the others: 'Born.—Parents.—This one's an intellectual, I see,' said the Director.

'Not by the way he's behaving.'

'Look at the record. Father—University teacher. Mother—ballet dancer. What was our long-haired gentleman doing on board this ship at all?'

'The way he's been behaving, I'd say he was a throw-back.'

It was true. All Simpson's life, his breeding had warred with his abilities. His father was an academic, a kind careful man of some eminence and much learning. His mother had been a dancer. While she was still a girl, her parents had taken her to see Pavlova. She was one of the many little girls who became dancers from that experience, one of the few who so far mastered her art as to become, at eighteen, a member of Pavlova's company. She was a good dancer, but not great. When Pavlova died and the company broke up, Jim's mother did not choose to look for another employer, whom, it did not seem to her, she could reverence as she had revered and adored

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Davlova, and so she left the stage and became a good competent housewife as she had once been a good competent dancer.

But Jim was not a dancer; he was not an artist at all. And, unlike his father, he was not a scholar. Always in the bottom half of his class at school, he was set back the further by a decision to broaden his education by foreign travel. His father had received a year's leave to write a book, and took his family with him to Capri. Jim learned to swim. His chest broadened and his body tanned. He dived. He moved down, deep-down through the water, beautifully and without effort, doing this one thing superlatively well, so that his mother, competent woman, cried out with the joy of it from the rock on which she sat. But he did not work at his books, and, on his return, continued to move up slowly through the school with his juniors.

In other matters he was more precocious. He was a well-built boy, blond and sturdy at twelve years old. He was gregarious enough for there to form around him a gang of the neighbour boys, adventurous enough to lead them into the poorer quarters of the little town by the lake, there to war with other gangs. One evening, far from home, he and John Oakley were busied in the building of a rough raft. They were watched by a girl of perhaps fourteen years. Her feet were bare. She wore a soiled cotton dress and her face was dirty, not with the recent dirt of play, but with the old grime of poverty and squalor.

CASE HISTORIES

Neither knew who she was, though both knew that she was not of their own class. She watched them for some time, and then approached Jim directly. 'Do you know how to—?' she said.

'Yes.'

'Then let's do it.'

They went together into the scrub by the side of the lake. In what followed Jim felt something of an experimental interest, something of disappointment. The encounter over, the girl went away, and neither he nor John Oakley was ever to see her again.

John Oakley was a little frightened. 'Do you think she'll have a baby?' he said.

'No,' said Jim, 'She's too young. Only women have babies.' Together they continued their work on the raft.

Not the encounter itself, but John's remark (or perhaps the two together) were to remain within Jim as long as he lived. The idea that the act of sex might be followed—probably would, indeed, be followed—by childbirth became rooted in Jim's mind as he grew older. He knew that, by the code of his class, if any woman were to have a child by him, he would have to marry her. And he found that he could not bear the thought of marriage, to a woman he had possessed. So, when he reached his late teens and such occasions were less rare and a little more seemly, he developed and took pride in an ability to withdraw. Beginning as an exercise in self-control, it became a point of honour with him, almost a sport,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

so that even when he discovered the ready availability of contraceptives, he refused to use them.

'Petting' was a practice exercised by custom among the young people of his community. Jim was much admired for his skill in being able to carry his intimacies almost to the point when all thought is lost in feeling, when his whole body would grow rigid with control, and he would check and say, 'That's all'.

The thrill of danger and the knowledge of security combined to make Jim very attractive to the young women of his set. Because of this he was able to change partners more frequently than any of his friends, and this made him still more attractive, and so he more readily despised the women who found him so.

During these years, only loved one girl touched his heart, and she was dead.

The lake by which they lived was a centre for tourists. These would come in the summer with their picnic lunches and cases of beer, and they would sprawl about on the bank in the sun, or swim in the shallows, or take out a canoe on to the lake's surface. Sometimes one of these canoes would upset; sometimes its occupants would be drowned. If the fatality were not discovered until late evening, or if the bodies were held by weeds, the local authorities would come for him, since he was by far the finest swimmer of the community. He would change into his bathing trunks and fetch his rubber flippers, and go with

CASE HISTORIES

them in the rowboat that carried the grapple, and, when they would reach the spot where the canoe was floating, he would lower himself into the water, a knife in one hand for the weeds, a flashlight strapped to his forehead, and he would search for the body. If it were a woman, he would pull her to the surface by her hair, if a man, he would attach the grapple carefully to the clothing.

On this occasion, it was early morning when they came for him, and the sun had risen by the time they found the canoe in a secluded inlet of the lake. By it were floating some empty beer cans and a child's rag picture book. As he swam under water by the edges of the weeds, he saw the child herself.

She was perhaps ten years old, precisely and almost picturesquely dressed like an illustration to *Alice In Wonderland*. Her long blonde hair lay free of her face in the water. He put out a hand to grasp it, and could not. It was difficult to breathe. As he swam to the surface, he felt a harsh pain in his chest and temples.

'There's a kid down there,' he said. 'A girl' .

'All right, bring her up. Do you want the grapple?'

'No!' To himself he seemed to be shouting, but the men noticed nothing. He swam again below the surface, and cut away the weeds that held the drowned girl. He put his arms gently about her, and brought her to the boat. The men took her from him, and placed her in the bows.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Then Jim dived again. He found the man, gross in his shirt-sleeves and suspenders, a collarless commonplace man, drunken and gross among the weeds. He tugged at the man and cut roughly at his clothes to free him. They had lowered the grapple from the boat, and he forced the hook into the flesh of the man's upper belly beneath the ribs, and so let them draw the body to the surface.

'Jeezel' said one of the men. 'You didn't have to do that.'

Jim did not speak. He did not look at the men in the boat, or at the drowned man, or at the child, but turned and swam to the shore. When he reached home, he ate the breakfast his mother had prepared, and then went to bed, falling asleep almost at once. Neither he nor his parents mentioned the incident when he woke.

So onward and upward. He graduated from school with difficulty, shocking his father by the decision not to go to college. What, in his condition, could he do? He was fitted by temperament and ability to be a road-builder, say, or a plumber, but he had been gently bred and the society of road-builders or plumbers would not have been congenial to him. His parents had not the capital to buy him a small farm; a hired agricultural labourer he would not be. There remained the army and the police.

The second was not an alternative for him, since

CASE HISTORIES

the police represented a social order he had already come to dislike, an order of schoolteachers and clergymen, of the vice-presidents of banks, of paper diplomas and white collars and obsequious smiles. It was an order that forced on him this false choice either to fail in making a fine position—which is always to be censured, and would place him in the society of those whose manners offended him—or to succeed in fashioning a career he could only, as things were, detest. Relentless in this, it was yet permissive enough in other directions; it would allow you to drown small girls.

So he became a soldier, but not in the forces of his own country, where, again, there would be examinations to pass before he would get a commission, and in which the peace-time barrack life of a private was coarse and constricted. He became a soldier of fortune. That takes money. He was lucky in inheriting a small legacy at the very start of his new life.

At first, the fortunes for which he soldiered were his own.

An old prospector had lived by the lake. Venomous and arthritic, he had yet shown a fondness for our blond swimmer, and would tell him tales of old searches, of nuggets that you could dig up, whole and shining from the soil, of strange snakes that bit, strange fevers that slew, strange quarrels between brother and brother, so that no man lived to bring the gold away. But there was one story in which the old man and a partner had washed the tailings of an

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

abandoned mine, and had collected a respectable (but not fantastis) quantity of golden grains, which were then taken away by Authority, so that again they ended with nothing.

This had always seemed to Jim a happening likely enough. He turned the greater part of his legacy into a beat-up but sturdy Ford, and sought out the old man in the Public Ward of the hospital whither his relations had sent him to die. Fighting death with the same passive stubbornness he had used against starvation, the sun, and his partner's treacheries, he took time off to tell Jim the location of the mine. Shortly afterwards, he died. It impressed Jim greatly that the information should have been couched, so to speak, in the old man's dying words.

The mine existed. Driving over the rutted roads, when the old Ford only seemed to be held together by baling-wire, Jim was alone for the first time in his life, and hated it. Introverts do not care to live alone. He had looked, during the long years of his growing, deeper and deeper into himself, and he did not like what he found there. It was necessary for him to be with other people, however little he cared for them. By foisting a false self on them, he could escape for a while from the real self he had come to fear, and always he hoped unconsciously that, if enough people were to believe in this false self, in time he too might come to believe in it. But he was alone during his journey, and alone at the mine, alternately irritable and lassitudinous, drinking himself to sleep each

CASE HISTORIES

evening while the liquor lasted, and, when it ran out, going far out of his way to buy more, however vile, from the villages.

The samples he took yielded, on assay, between 5 and 6 per cent of gold; with capital, it might be profitable to work over the tailings again, using more modern and more precise equipment than the original miners had owned. But he had no capital. Alternatively, to stay there himself, washing the tailings primitively by hand, might yield him a living but was a prospect insupportable to contemplate. He came back, his legacy spent, and with a great fear now of living alone.

* * *

Loneliness to fear, authority to dislike. These two had in some way to be made to balance. Marriage, he believed, would keep loneliness away. (He had not learned to distinguish between the kinds of loneliness, or that there is no loneliness more desperate than that of the married man who does not love his wife.) Fighting, he knew, would help to satisfy his hatred of authority.

He was intelligent enough not to search for fighting, but to place himself in the way of it. He found a commission in the armed forces of a power only recently released, by an enlightened mother-country, from colonial dependence. There was much joy in this position, much pride to be found in training his men to look well and to fight well, much warmth in

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

the respect, the loyalty and the affection that they gave him in return. And, when he found himself engaged in the petty alarms and constant danger of frontier warfare against a people who took as much delight in fighting as he did, he knew that he had found his *métier* after all, and that only in killing and offering himself to be killed could he make that momentary completeness of himself that he denied to sex.

Had he been wise, he would have been satisfied with this. He was not wise. Marriage was to have been his other defence. He went into marriage as a man marches his company into what he knows is an ambush, for no better reason than that he has planned to be back in camp by night-fall.

She was a Eurasian girl, spare and tan-skinned, with oiled black hair and a clear complexion. Her kind had gathered about military cantonments when Europeans had administered the country, and continued now to do so. But she was not a camp-follower; she had been to college and despised ignorant people. Her B.Sc. kept her from secretarial work in a European business firm, her sensibilities from employing her veterinary training in any work that would put her under the orders of a 'native'. Self-discipline prevented her from over-eating and from over-talking. Jim did not like fat people, and her silences made him believe that she was not clever, so he married her, not for love but in the fulfilment of a plan. She married him, not for love but for the

CASE HISTORIES

colour of his skin. Many arranged marriages work out very well. This did not.

So the second part of his plan brought the first to nothing. For so long, he endured his wife and her relations. He was not able to give himself to anyone; how far less to her! Physically, indeed, she forced him to do so, believing that in a child she had a further hold, not so much on him, whom she disliked, but on Europe (which also, could she but have known it, she would have disliked). Thus to be forced to forgo his pride and spend himself in her was another reason for hating her. He hated that in her most of all, but also he hated her silly-clever chatter, now released, her insistence on 'European' customs and 'European' food instead of the native foods he had come to like, hated the way in which she patronized his 'native' brother-officers, hated her increasing slovenliness—oh, there was nothing about her that he did not hate, hating even her generosity, her devotion to what she believed to be his public interests, her fidelity, since they gave him so much the less reason for hating her.

In her turn, of course, she grew to hate him, though, for long after any pretence of affection had ceased between them, she tried to hold him to the performance of his marital obligations. (*If only I have a dear little baby*, she thought, *he will not dare to leave me.*) When finally it became obvious that she was, in fact, pregnant, he resigned his commission and left the country.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

John Green, of Green & Thornhill, attorneys, was already a prosperous person, with business interests and friends in many different enterprises. It was not difficult for him to find a sinecure for his brother. Besides, Tom could be useful. Green was engaged, with a number of friends, in fitting out a vessel for private trade with the Indies. It would be necessary to have someone on board whom they could trust, some person close to the counsels of the group of owners, a captain whose command would be nominal only, since in matters of navigation he would depend upon the mate, and the details of commerce would be handled by Mr Gallant, the super-cargo.

This was Tom's position when, after many delays, the *Worcester* sailed, the position of a second-lieutenant whose inexperience puts him at the mercy of his non-commissioned officers. But, as the second-lieutenant, if he is not killed off early, grows easily into command, so Tom grew during the long voyage in many seas, and, with Gallant's death off the coast of Malabar, one of his controls was removed. With Maddër he was always in amity.

He grew to identify himself closely with his ship, seldom visiting ashore when they touched port, because he was happier on board. From this settled happiness, he began again to write, and the sea and the sun washed and bleached most of Miss Gripe from his poems.

CASE HISTORIES

He became a Sunday poet, and discovered that this was all of a poet he wanted to be, tinkering with rhyme and metre as a college boy might tinker with the engine of a sports car, or a maiden lady paint endlessly careful water-colours of the same valley. The violence was gone, and the details of the craft absorbed him during the silent days at sea. And he acquired a curiosity about the methods and interests of other poets, and when his ship put into port for any time, would seek out literary society. Quite early, during his stay in the city, he had made the acquaintance of Saul Goldberg, a copy of whose latest volume, locally printed, he had seen in the windows of a bookstore.

Saul was a member of the 'Poetry as Self-Expression' school. In his vision of the ideal society, every man was a poet; each found fulfilment in the practice of his own art, and nobody read the work of anyone else. 'My God,' said Saul, 'it's crap to read. Why do I want to read a poem when I can write one. It's creation, Tom. It's a birth, my God, it's a wonderful thing.' Like D. H. Lawrence, Saul never revised, but with less excuse. 'If I don't like it,' he said, 'I just tear it up and write another.'

Saul's wife was a school-teacher before he saved her. Now she also created, dribbling coloured lacquers on to linoleum late at night. 'It's freedom, my God,' said Saul. 'It's good and strong and free stuff she does out there. My God, she needed that, Tom. It was an artificial life she led with those kids. Rotten.'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

The enamel was tacky and slow to dry. Mr Goldberg put his elbow on one of his wife's compositions, and it stuck to him. 'Myrtle, dear,' he called, 'The Immaculate Conception has come off on my sleeve. Do we have any benzine?'

'Under the bed.' Mrs Goldberg cried, 'Under the bed with the hack-saw. You'll have to get it. I'm slicing marshmallows for the salad.'

That was at a dinner they gave Tom when he came to visit. They were good people: it was a good dinner though Tom was confused by the intensity of creative composition that seemed to go on all the time.

They cleared the plates, and washed up, and people came in to visit. Saul read his poems aloud:

In one corner of the room, a small girl named Mouse grunted rhythmically as she strained at the pot. She was the daughter of a disc-jockey and his lovely pregnant wife, who sat uncomfortably at Saul's feet, listening. After each poem the disc-jockey said mechanically, 'I liked *that* one. Saul.'

Mouse asked if she might get off. 'Not till you're finished, darling,' said the pregnant lady. 'Read us another one Lover-boy. I don't care for the words, but I love the noise you make with them.'

'It's rugged,' said Saul, 'My God, it's craggy. Listen to the rocks in this.'

A small lady with scared eyes sat by Tom. 'I don't know what we'd do without Saul,' she said, allowing her hand to rest on Tom's thigh. 'It's a desert here, you know.' Tom moved so that the hand fell off, and

CASE HISTORIES

the disc-jockey began to sing folk songs; touched off as it were, by Mouse, who, taking matters into her own will, left the pot, climbed on to a chair, and, in falling, knocked the guitar off the wall.

'How did that child get up there?' the pregnant lady asked.

'She has aspiration.' Saul said. 'She climbed. My God, don't check her.'

After a while, the songs became more and more left-wing. The disc-jockey did *Talking Union*. '*My sister takes in washing, Makes her living on her back,*' Tom sang soulfully and a man came in from one of the neighbouring houses, and asked the party to make less noise because his wife was ill. 'Police Spies!' said Saul. 'In a Police State! You can't trust anyone nowadays.'

It had been a happy unself-conscious evening, one of his best in the city for the Goldbergs could not afford to go on knowing Tom when people began to talk. Saul had been both frank and furtive about it, coming to Tom's lodging in the evening, with his coat-collar turned up. 'We da'n't do it,' he said, 'I could lose my job. We could be drummed out—we don't own that house, you know; it's on a lease.' Tom watched him leave, watched him walk uneasily in the shadows of the street, a small ridiculous figure with his hunched shoulders and his sheltering collar. 'It's dull in this town, since my playmates left,' he

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US
thought, and went back indoors to his lonely room.

When, a week later, and still at night, they came to arrest him, Tom was almost glad that at last he would have company for a while. There was, at any rate, no fuss. Mrs Bartlett appeared in the hall, a dressing-gown over her nightie and her hair loose on her shoulders, and Tom said, 'Don't worry, Mrs Bartlett. It's some sort of mistake. I'll be back soon.'

The detective sniffed. 'I wouldn't count on that,' he said. 'I'd be putting that card back up in the window if I were you, missus.' They walked together to the waiting car, and Mrs Bartlett stood at the door in the cold air, and watched the tail-light until it disappeared.

'And now he's safe,' the Director said. 'Where did you find the others?'

'One was in a bar. We didn't have to arrest Simpson, because he'd been in a fight, and got himself pulled in anyway. Seems to like fighting.'

Fights all over the world. Brawls in 'obscure taverns, dubious enterprises in the Middle East—not much that was criminal, since he felt that to break the law is to move within its framework, whereas the soldier fights against the plea of law itself and of organized society. He had been recruited to the

CASE HISTORIES

Worcester because, in times of war, it is good to keep company with war-like men, and he was content enough, as the ship spanned the wide seas, to remain outside even the simple organization of her crew.

Jim did not bear the weary waiting days easily. He considered ways of leaving the city altogether, but found that he did not care to escape and leave the others behind. He could not keep to his room, but roamed the countryside, skirting the farms and woods, poaching where he could, sleeping out, finding every way the countryside could offer to break the monotony of waiting. And eventually, he decided to look for trouble in the city itself.

At first he looked in the bars of the big hotels, polished and expensive with subdued amber lighting. He drank slowly, appreciatively, moving from one bar to another, hunting. The evening was early yet. He did not expect to find his antagonist at this hour, but automatically he glanced around each fresh bar as he entered it, searching for the gross tipsy gentleman who might be provoked into provoking him. *At last he finds him.*

It was late in the evening. He had left the smart bars and descended to those of the middle bracket, where, in any case, he was more likely to happen on the kind of man for whom he searched. Mr Cooper was making, it seemed, some kind of a speech to a nondescript gentleman in black. They sat together on high stools before the bar, a dangerous position for

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Mr Cooper, who thumped and swayed with the energy of his discourse.

The stool next to the nondescript gentleman was empty. Jim sat on it and ordered scotch on the rocks.

'Scum!' Mr Cooper was saying, 'Scum! Don't give me any of this crap about your waiting mothers, I said to him. What I want to know, I said, is what's happened to my investment, and remember, Mackenzie, I said, it was by your advice.'

'Roddy's a good fellow,' said the nondescript gentleman.

'So he is, by God, so he is, and I'll fight the man who denies it. None better. Roddy's a good friend of mine, no mistake about *that*. And he'll see they get what's coming to them. But when it comes to compensation, there's where common sense must step in. Compensation is due, I told him, to your investors, and you can leave the mothers and wives to take care of themselves, which, if I know sailors' wives, they'll already have done long ago.'

" 'You talking about sailors' wives?' Jim said.

'And, if I was, what of it?' said Mr Cooper.

'Now, now, Jim,' said the nondescript gentleman. 'We don't want any trouble. Take no notice of him.'

Mr. Cooper seemed already to be regretting the notice he had taken. He turned his back to Jim, who swung him round, saying, 'Why don't you repeat that? If you know anything about sailors' wives, a sailor ought to hear it.'

The nondescript gentleman rose to his feet, and Mr

CASE HISTORIES

Cooper foolishly did the same. 'I'm not wasting words on you, young man,' he said, and Jim hit him, once on the side of the jaw, and once in the upper belly just below the ribs. As he fell, he vomited forth his last drink, and so lay with his face in it. Almost immediately afterwards, the bartender reached over the bar, his pose Homeric in the lighted mirrors, and hit Jim on the back of the head with a bottle. The fight was over.

When Jim awoke, he was in a cell by himself. He lay on the floor, wondering about this, until the door was unlocked by a man in uniform.

'What's the matter?' Jim said. 'Why didn't you put me in with the other drunks?'

'You are not charged with drunkenness.'

'Not? I was drunk, wasn't I?' Wakening memory wakened alarm in him. 'My God,' he said, 'I didn't kill that fool?'

'No.'

'Then?'

'It is my duty to tell you that you are under arrest on a charge of piracy. Bail is not allowable in such cases, and you will be detained here until the preliminary hearing.'

'Piracy? I'm not a pirate. Who says so?'

'I am not permitted to discuss the case,' the uniformed man said, 'I am only an official of this prison. It is not my task either to prosecute you or to defend

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

you, but only to keep you safe until you are tried, and, should you be convicted, to help to hang you. Meanwhile, here is a receipt for the things that have been taken from your pockets. You will find it a little difficult to walk without shoelaces, but, if you will go before me, I shall show you where you are to be bathed.

VII

James Madder was arrested in a bar. Most of his evenings in port were spent so. All his spare time was most carefully regulated: if you knew the key of the pattern by which he lived, you would always know where to find him. This was necessary. Self-control, which is necessary to self-respect, would be impossible if he were to allow himself to think about eternity; each day must be divided into manageable fragments. So long he must spend in eating; so long he would force himself to read.

Every evening between the hours of seven and eight he devoted to God—not to prayer, but to God, who was given a chance at that time to save him; if there was to be a miracle, he was ready to receive it between the hours of seven and eight. He did not suggest to God what He should do; he expected nothing that could be put into words, not to be suddenly made happy, not even anything so definite as a freedom from the compulsive itch that would take him at eight o'clock from his lonely cabin to the

CASE HISTORIES

lonely street. Indeed, he dared not put his prayer into words, for, if he were to do so, what could he say but, *Lord, strike me dead, I pray*, and this, at forty years old, he could not bring yet himself to admit.

At eight o'clock, he took his change from the desk and counted it. Since usually he drank more quickly than he could afford, he had to ration himself; he would consume so many drinks in one hour, take so many sips at a drink in five minutes. He would go out and walk the streets, and he would find a bar (he had a notebook containing the addresses of bars in most of the ports at which the ship would ever call), and sit in it, drinking, for so long, and talking to no one, because, at his age, it would never do to make the first move and, at his age, not many people would choose to talk to him.

The bar, when he entered it, was nearly empty; he preferred this. When he was young, he would take pride in entering a bar and in watching the heads turn to look at him. That one moment would be his, when the silent middle-aged men, the drunks, the weepers, the screamers, the plump young thing camping it up by the cash register, all would be looking at him, looking him over, wondering whether and when. It was like stepping into an aquarium of eyes, big, inquiring, envious eyes often, frightened eyes, suspicious, but wanting to be friendly, eyes now very much like his own, but eyes which were turned on him tonight only to be turned at once away in silent rejection. For his life did not

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

allow him to become an habitué of any one place, and, in the half-world, a strange face is not attractive unless it is young. So he entered the bar early and sat alone, sipping his drink and speaking to no one.

He sat alone and the bar began to fill. Two hours passed; he finished his third bottle of beer and would allow himself one more. Almost directly opposite him—for the bar was in a circle as so often they are—there sat a young man, dark-haired, wearing an expression that was a little sulky, a little amused, as if he were saying, *Well, Goodness, what am I doing in this place?* It was obvious that he was not experienced, and a little frightened of being picked up. When it was a little later, a little wilder, someone would speak to him. (*Why shouldn't I?* Madder thought, but he was afraid). He watched the young man, drank his next beer more quickly than he had planned, and ordered a fifth. What harm could speaking do? Maybe this was the time, so long-awaited, so often mistaken, the stand that is more than one-night, one-week, one-month, that is more than the coupling of two strangers in a bed or against a wall; it was a time that had come for some, he knew, and why not this time for him? It was not as if he were old, after all. He did not wear a toupee, however sparse his hair. He was neither obese nor effeminate. If the young man had not wanted to be propositioned, he would not have come to the bar at all. He left the bar to visit the toilet; when he returned the young man was

CASE HISTORIES

still there and still alone. He walked over to him, and sat on the stool next to him.

'Do you have a light?' he said.

The young man looked at him. 'Sorry,' he said, stood up, and walked out of the bar.

There was a moment's silence. Then the plural creature by the cash register threw into the silence a single remark, heard by everyone in the room. 'Why, Auntie,' he said, 'how *forward*!'

And James Maddar rose. He was shaking from head to foot, but self-control had gone now, and self-respect with it, out through the swing doors with the boy who did not have a light. He did not see the people in the bar, but he could feel their eyes. He heard the whispers, the giggling, was cut by the cruel tongues of sisterly malice. Somehow his feet moved. He pushed his way through the close air and the cruel smiles, and found his way to the doors and into the air, and was free at last.

Outside, two men stopped him. One said, 'Is your name James Maddar?'

'Yes.'

'Then I have a warrant for your arrest.'

He did not understand. He looked for the first time at the men, firm and depersonalized in their dark suits. 'I've done nothing,' he said. 'I only asked him for a light. You can't charge me for that.'

'For what?'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

‘I didn’t touch him,’ he said. ‘My God, I didn’t lay a finger on him. I asked him for a light, that’s all.’

The younger of the two men looked for a moment at the name above the bar, and smiled. ‘That’s all right, Nelly,’ he said. ‘That’s the least of your troubles. The charge is piracy.’

v!

TRIAL

- *'At this distance of time, the story of the judicial murder of Captain Green can be read with pity rather than in anger, especially if we bear in mind that the conception of the nature of evidence was in those days most unscientific.'*
G. M. TREVELYAN, *op. cit.*

Mr Tavenner: In the course of your activity in the party did you become acquainted with a person by the name of Ralph Smith?

Mr Ashe. I did.

Mr Tavenner: Was he a member of the party?

Mr Ashe: He was not. He was a member of the Young Communist League . . . I might say that Ralph Smith, I interviewed him about three years ago in his home up north, and made a special trip to see him, and he professes to be out of the Communist Party to-day, but he refused to bear arms in defence of the United States. I can only draw one conclusion from that. (p. 1,440)

Mr Doyle: Have you any suggestion for the functioning of this Committee? . . . Are we functioning in your judgment in a helpful, constructive manner or is there something we should add to our functioning?

Mr Ashe: No. I think you are doing a very excellent job. (p. 1,456)

Mr Potter: Mr Ashe, I wish to join my colleagues in thanking you for the forthright and wonderful statements you have made. The American people will be proud of your testimony. (p. 1,462)

From the transcript of the House of Representatives, Subcommittee of the Committee of Un-American Activities' investigation of Communist Infiltration of Hollywood Motion-Picture Industry,—Part 4. Testimony of Harold J. Ashe

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US
A RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS BEFORE A SUB-
COMMITTEE OF INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PIRACIES ALLEGED AGAINST CERTAIN MEMBERS
OF THE CREW OF THE VESSEL, 'WORCESTER'

THE Committee met in the court-room of the High Court of Admiralty. Sitting with the Chairman were John, Earl of Loudon, John, Lord Belhaven, Lord Robert Dundas of Armistoun, Sir John Howe of Blackadder, and Mr John Cockburn, the younger.

Counsel present were Mr Alexander Higgins, counsel for the Committee, and Sir David Cunningham, counsel for Captain Thomas Green and other members of the crew of the vessel, *Worcester*.

FIRST DAY

At 10 a.m., the Court was called to order.

The Chairman: Now, first of all before we hear any of the witnesses who are to appear before us this morning, I should like to say something. I should like to say thank-you to the Police for procuring some of the witnesses you are to hear, and for keeping them safe for us, and to the caretaker of this court-room for having everything so neat and clean and convenient for us, and to the Signal Corps of the Army for providing our public address system.

I would also like to say thank-you to the many

TRIAL:

public-spirited citizens who have written to us to say how much they appreciate our work against piracy, and I should like to read into the record a letter which I received from the Chamber of Commerce this morning. It says—Well, I do not seem to have that letter with me after all, but its purport is that, even if our Investigation here should disclose that the members of the crew of the *Worcester* are *not* guilty of piracy, nevertheless the Chamber of Commerce promises that nobody in the city will employ any of them in any capacity, or sell them groceries, or allow them any place to live. And I think that shows a high public-spirited attitude, and I certainly applaud it.

Now, Mr Higgins, are you ready to proceed?

Mr Higgins: Yes, sir.

Sir David Cuninghame: I have an objection.

The Chairman: Well, now, Sir David, I do not have to remind you that you only attend this court by our courtesy, and you must try not to interrupt. This is not a trial, as you know; it is no more than an Investigation, and the usual forms of common law do not apply here.

Sir David: What happens if the Investigation discovers my clients to be guilty of piracy?

The Chairman: That is a very stupid question. You are quite aware what the penalty for piracy is. Is that all you wanted to say?

Sir David: No, sir, it is not. I wish first of all on my clients' behalf to challenge the jurisdiction of this

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Committee. My clients are not citizens of our City, nor is it alleged that the piracy of which they are accused took place within the bounds of our coasts. The court cannot, therefore, have competence *in loco delicti*, or *in loco domicili*.

The Chairman: I shall pass that one to you, Mr Higgins.

Mr Higgins: It is true, sir, that this court has no competence in respect of the place where the piracy was committed, or in respect of the place of the prisoners' customary habitation, but there is a superior consideration—*in loco deprehensionis*, the place at which they were taken, which was this City, and so the court has competence.

The Chairman: I think that answers your objection, Sir David.

Sir David: Another point, sir, is that the whole crew of this vessel is being tried—

The Chairman: Not tried, Sir David.

Sir David: Investigated then. They are all being investigated together. But even if it were shown that Captain Green were guilty, it might be said that his crew were under his orders and had to obey them, and so they should be investigated separately. Besides, it is common knowledge that some of them were ashore when this act is alleged to have been committed, and so could have taken no part in anything of the sort, and their companions should be allowed to say so in evidence.

The Chairman: Are you admitting that Captain Green is guilty, Sir David?

TRIAL.

Sir David: No, of course not.

The Chairman: Well, it seems to me that this is a very unimportant point. Whether the sailors were on board or not, it cannot be denied, that they have since associated with their comrades, and it is already a matter proven in these Investigations that association is the same as guilt.

Sir David: Another point, sir.

The Earl of Loudon: I have to go to the toilet.

The Chairman: Let the record show that the Earl of Loudon is not with us for these next few minutes.

Sir David: My objection is that the whole incident of which my clients have been accused is too indefinite. There is no day or place suggested for this piracy, no name of the ship that it is alleged has been pirated—no *corpus delicti*, in short, and so, in sum, no crime.

The Chairman: Mr Higgins?

Mr Higgins: Well, sir, we have thought of that. We have considered naming the ship; that is the Darien Company's ship, the *Speedy Return*. But then we reflected that this ship might not be lost after all—it is part of the fiendishness of this crime that we do not actually know there has been a crime—and it would be a source of great embarrassment to us if it were discovered that the *Speedy Return* had not been pirated. So we have decided not to name any ship.

The Chairman: Yes, I can see that. You did very well. We must avoid any sort of embarrassment that

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

might hinder us in these Investigations or bring them into disrepute. I am afraid that we shall have to over-rule your objection on this score, Sir David.

Mr Higgins: I should like to call as the first witness this morning, Mr Charles May.

The Chairman: Is Mr May in court?

Mr May: Yes, I am.

The Chairman: So you are. And I should like to say that you have done very well in coming here this morning to testify.

Mr May: Thank you, sir.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr May. Let him be sworn.
(*Mr May was sworn*).

The Chairman: Now let the record disclose that the Earl of Loudon has returned from the toilet.

TESTIMONY OF CHARLES MAY

Mr Higgins: You are Charles May?

Mr May: That's right.

Mr Higgins: How old are you, Mr May?

Mr May: Twenty-six years old.

Mr Higgins: What is your position in life?

Mr May: I hold the appointment of surgeon on board the ship, *Worcester*. That is to say, I am a doctor.

The Earl of Loudon: Is this doctor fellow one of the—

The Chairman: No, Mr May is a friendly witness.

Mr May: Why yes, I certainly am that. I want to stand up here and say that I don't believe that any—

TRIAL ·

body who has had any experience of piracy could keep from hating and loathing the whole idea of it with his whole being, unless of course he was a pirate himself. And when I was told what George Haines had said in this very town, why it only confirmed for me what I already knew to be true, that he was a base pirate.

Mr Higgins: What did Mr Haines say?

Mr May: As I've heard tell, he said, right here to one of your townspeople here he said—Well, I have forgotten the exact words he used, but it was to the effect that he saw no difference between a pirate and an honest man. And when a man uses that sort of language, and before a woman, I know what to think.

The Chairman: That does you great credit, Mr May.

Mr May: What I always say is, 'Breathes there a man with soul so dead, he never to himself hath said, "This is my own, my native land"?' That applies wherever you go, and it's something I learned at my mother's knee. And I would say that, provided a man remembers what he has learned at his mother's knee, it will keep him straight, and he will never go wrong.

Mr Higgins: Would you like to tell us what you know about piracy on board the *Worcester*, Mr May?

Mr May: Well, that is what I have come here to do. There's plenty of people would like to have stopped me coming, but I would think nothing of myself if I had allowed them to intimidate me. Why,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

o there was one of these very prisoners—witnesses, I should say—as he was brought into court, I said to him, ‘Hullo’, I said, and he wouldn’t even reply, but I was not going to be intimidated, and I have determined to speak right out what I know.

The Chairman: If you will give me the name of anyone else who refuses to speak to you, Mr May, I will ensure that he is brought here for investigation as well.

Mr May: That’s very handsome of you, sir, and if I should happen to think of anyone, I will certainly let you know.

Anyway, I was telling about this piracy. It was two years ago now, of course, and we were off the coast of Malabar in the ordinary way of trade, as you might say. Well, I went ashore to see about some business, and while I was ashore, I distinctly heard the noise of some guns firing at sea. You can imagine that I thought this was very suspicious, and so some days later I met a native, and I asked him what the firing had been.

Mr Higgins: What was the name of this native? For the record.

Mr May: Now it will just show you how this incident impressed me when I tell you that I can remember that native’s name, although usually I can no more tell those blacks apart than fly; in fact I always say it beats me why their mothers take the trouble to give them names at all. But this one native was called Commodore, and he told me that my ship

TRIAL

(meaning by that, of course, the *Worcester*) had been fighting at sea with another ship, and had captured it, and that he had seen this.

Mr Higgins: This was, in fact, piracy?

Mr May: Well naturally.

Mr Higgins: Do you remember anything else that struck you as particularly suspicious at the time?

Mr May: Indeed I do. Some time afterwards I had returned to the coast, and I met a party of our men who had come ashore in the long-boat for water. Now those men said nothing to me of any fight at sea or anything like that. They did not even mention it. And that struck me as very suspicious.

Captain Green: They didn't mention a fight because there was no fight.

The Chairman: If there are any further interruptions, I shall clear this court, and we shall continue the investigation in private. I want to make it clear to everyone present that these hearings are only public by our courtesy, and we shall not tolerate interruptions. . .

Captain Green: But, My God, when you can't even question the man—

The Chairman: We shall ask any questions that may be necessary. And may I say right now that I hope all the witnesses whom we are to hear will be as co-operative as Mr May:

Mr May: Well, what I say is, if the men had nothing to hide, why didn't they say so?

Mr Higgins: Quite, quite. Anything else?

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Mr May: Yes, there was another suspicious circumstance. Later on again, I went on board for some medicines I needed. I noticed that the crew were busy re-stowing some crates and bales under the direction of Mr. Madder, the first mate, a man of notoriously bad character.

Mr Higgins: Bad character?

Mr May: Oh yes. He is always off by himself to places, and he has never been, what I mean, one of the group, and he is often irritable and bad-tempered; you might say, surly. I have always found him to be antipathetic to me, in spite of what I have tried to do for him in the way of friendliness.

Mr Higgins: Yes?

Mr May: Well, I was standing there in among the boxes, you know, and I just asked Mr Madder what was doing, making some light quip, the nature of which I do not quite recall. He then swore at me. He said that I was to 'mind my plaster box'; that is to say that I was to look after my own affairs, and leave him to look after the rest.

Mr Higgins: In other words, he told you to ask no questions?

Mr May: That's right. He told me to ask no questions.

Mr Higgins: Otherwise it would be the worse for you?

Mr May: That's right

TRIAL

Mr Higgins: Do you remember any other suspicious incidents in which Mr Madder was concerned?

Mr May: Well, yes I do. I remember that once when I had to treat two members of the crew—they were Duncan Mackay and Edward Cummings, as I recall—for wounds that they had incurred in the arm, I asked them what had happened that they should have incurred such wounds, and Mr Madder, who was present, told me to shut my useless mouth.

Mr Higgins: That was just after the piracy?

Mr May: Yes, it was about two months after. Well, maybe it was less than two months. Maybe it was quite soon after.

Mr Higgins: Where are the two men now?

Mr May: Mackay and Cummings? It's curious you should ask that, because, as I recall, they both died.

Mr Higgins: You mean that Mr Madder heard you question these two men as to how they came by their wounds, and shortly afterwards they both died?

Mr May: That's right. The wounds turned gangrenous, and they died.

Mr Higgins: And thereafter you heard no more talk of the piracy at any time?

Mr May: Nobody said a word about it. There was a conspiracy of silence, as you might say. The whole of the return voyage, I never heard one word from anyone about this piracy, and you can't tell me

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

, that's natural. I mean, you'd think at least they'd want to talk about it.

Mr Higgins: I have no more questions for Mr May at this time.

The Chairman: Then I will yield to the gentlemen who sit with me here as assessors. The Earl of Loudon?

The Earl of Loudon: When are we going to recess?

The Chairman: I think we shall recess very shortly now. I would say that it depends on how many questions we are going to ask Mr May.

The Earl of Loudon: No more questions.

The Chairman: Lord Belhaven?

Lord Belhaven: You say you are a doctor, Mr May?

Mr May: That's right.

Lord Belhaven: As a doctor, would you say that you can recognize a pirate when you see one?

Mr May: Well, I don't know that there are any actual physical signs. Of course they often look rather shifty you know, and I suppose there are other signs. I would say that pirates are often very vain and conceited people; they wear such things as ear-rings and other finery. And I have often found that perverts and other such people can easily be converted to piracy, since they generally lack any real sense of social obligation.

Lord Belhaven: Long-hairs and such people?

Mr May: Yes, people like that. Of course I don't mean to imply that all such are pirates, but there is certainly a tendency.

The Chairman: Coming from you as a medical man,

TRIAL •

Mr May, you may be sure that opinion will carry weight here. Lord Robert Dundas?

Lord Robert: No further questions.

The Chairman: Sir John? Mr Cockburn? Well, if we have nothing else to ask this witness, we will recess for the day.

CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

DOCTOR GIVES EVIDENCE IN PIRATE CASE

'There was a conspiracy of silence,' said Dr Charles May, giving evidence today before the Investigating Committee of the High Court. He said that two men had been killed by the first mate, James Madder, for daring to tell him the truth, and he himself had been threatened unless he kept his mouth shut.

To keep the matter secret, the piracy had been committed while Dr May was away from the ship, but, on his return, his enquiries had led him to discover the truth.

'It was a dramatic moment when I realized what had happened. I knew that I was in deadly peril.'

Since deciding to testify before the Committee, Dr May has several times been threatened by his old shipmates, the members of the crew of the *Worcester*.

Interviewed after the Court had recessed, Dr May told our reporter, 'I knew I had a higher duty to tell what I know.'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

SECOND DAY

At 10 a.m. the Court was called to order.

The native, Antonio Ferdinando, was sworn.

The Chairman: Mr Higgins, this man is a native as I understand it.

Mr Higgins: Yes, sir.

The Chairman: But he makes no difficulty about taking the oath.

Mr Higgins: No, sir. He is a Christian.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr Higgins. I wished to have it quite clear on the record that this man is in every sense a Christian and a reliable witness. In this City, we make no distinction of colour, and we regard all men as equally entitled to a fair deal, and I want to say that, as far as this case is concerned, I am here with my colleagues to ensure that.

TESTIMONY OF ANTONIO FERDINANDO

Mr Higgins: You are Antonio Ferdinando, and you are a native of India?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: You have been employed in the galley of the vessel, *Worcester*?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: You were taken into employment on board this vessel about two and a half years ago?

TRIAL

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: And you were allowed liberty on board the ship? Enough to be able to notice what was going on?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: Shortly after you arrived on board, while the *Worcester* was at sea, you observed an engagement between the *Worcester* and another ship?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: This other ship was manned by white men?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: And the fight was kept up for three days?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: And when it was over, Captain Green and his men killed the crew of this other vessel with hatchets, and pitched their bodies overboard?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Sir David Cuningham: May I make an interjection? Would it not be simpler for Mr. Higgins to relate the whole testimony he proposes to extract from this witness? The witness might then reply 'Yes' at the end of Mr Higgins' story instead of at the end of each sentence as at present, and much time would be saved.

The Earl of Loudon: Quite true, quite true.

The Chairman: Are you in earnest with this suggestion, Sir David?

Sir David: An alternative would be that Mr Higgins should allow the witness to tell his own story.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

The Chairman: Well, if that is what you want—

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: In that case, Mr Ferdinando, perhaps you would like to continue.

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: Tell your story, man. Tell the court what you saw.

Mr Ferdinando: I have seen many men killed.

Mr Higgins: How many men?

Mr Ferdinando: Many men. They are killed with hatchets. I am standing in the sloop with Captain Green, and we are fighting a ship, and killing the men with hatchets?

Sir David Cuninghame: Sloop?

The Chairman: Sir David, you have been warned about these interruptions.

Sir David: I am sorry, sir. I did not understand about the sloop. Does the witness suggest that the *Worcester* is a sloop?

Mr Higgins: No, he doesn't. A detachment of men from the *Worcester* engaged this other vessel in a sloop—which I take to be a much smaller vessel used for commissions about the coast where it would be dangerous to take a vessel of the *Worcester's* draft.

Sir David: You mean that Captain Green engaged a vessel equal in tonnage and armament with his own by putting off in some cockle-shell, built to run errands and furnished, no doubt, with a pop-gun—

TRIAL

Mr Higgins: Am I to be protected from these constant interruptions, sir?

Sir David: Am I to be allowed to question the witness?

The Chairman: No, Sir David, you are not, and you know that you are not. I ought not to have to remind you that you are not engaged in some sort of legal tournament. This is not a trial. It is an Investigation. Witnesses before this Court have come forward, for the most part, quite voluntarily to help us, and they are not to be intimidated by cross-examination, but encouraged to speak out openly what they know. The witness may proceed. Please go on, Mr Ferdinando.

Mr Ferdinando: I am in the sloop with Captain Green, and we are murdering the men most barbarously with hatchets.

Mr Higgins: Did you yourself kill anybody?

Mr Ferdinando: No, I am not killing. I am defenceless man. No, I am pleading for the life of these men on my knees, and Captain Green is villainously striking me.

Mr Higgins: None of the men of the *Worcester* were wounded?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes, I am wounded.

Mr Higgins: By Captain Green?

Mr Ferdinando: I am wounded in fighting. See my wound.

(*The witness shows a scar on his right fore-arm.*)

Mr Higgins: But you carried no weapons?

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Mr Ferdinando: No, I am defenceless. The wicked captain wounded me. Then I am showing my wound to the doctor, and Mr Madder has sworn at me, using most obscene phrases, and he has said, I will be killed if I show my wound.

Mr Higgins: He threatened to kill you if you told anyone of what you had seen?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: What happened to the cargo of the captured vessel?

Mr Ferdinando: Captain took it.

Mr Higgins: Of what did it consist? What was the cargo?

Mr Ferdinando: Many things.

Mr Higgins: What things?

Mr Ferdinando: Many things. Tapioca root and many things.

Mr Higgins: Tapioca root? Like, in fact, the tapioca root that was discovered by our own officers, who searched the vessel in Bruntisland harbour?

Mr Ferdinando: Yes.

Mr Higgins: And what happened to the ship that was captured?

Mr Ferdinando: Sold. Ship and cargo all sold to one native, Commodo, who is buying such things. All sold.

The Chairman: Yes, well I do not think that any of us will bother this witness with any further questions. We have another native witness, I think, Mr Higgins?

TRIAL^d

Mr Higgins: Yes, sir.

The Chairman: Now I have a suggestion here, but it is not my suggestion; it comes from Sir David Cuninghame here, who has suggested, if you remember, that it would be easier just to put the witness' story to him, you will recall, and have him agree to it. And I think that is very good suggestion and it would save much valuable time in this case. Now, you know, do you not, what this next witness, this native, intends to say?

Mr Higgins: Yes, sir.

The Chairman: And you know it to be the truth?

Mr Higgins: Yes, sir,

The Chairman: Then provided that we are sure that the witness is telling the truth, I do not see that it matters to anyone here how we get at it. That is all that interests us in this Court—to find out the truth. So, if you will have the witness sworn, we might as well go ahead.

(Mr Francisco was sworn.)

TESTIMONY OF ANTONIO FRANCISCO

Mr Higgins: Well now, Mr Francisco, I dare say you have heard the Chairman, and you understand that I am going to repeat your story to you, that is the story that you have already told to the Director of Public Security, and at the end you are to tell me whether that story is the truth, and you are to tell me if I make any mistakes, and you are not to be frightened to do that.

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Mr Francisco: (nodded his head, but did not speak).

Mr Higgins: You are Antonio Francisco, and you are a Christian, and you were recruited to the crew of the vessel, *Worcester*, off the coast of Malabar. You were employed as the personal servant of Captain Green. Some time after your recruitment, the *Worcester* engaged another vessel in a running fight. You did not actually see the fight, because you were kept below decks, but you heard the firing. Later on you saw some goods being brought aboard the *Worcester*, and you talked with your friend, Mr Ferdinando, who showed you a wound he had received. He told you that the *Worcester* had been fighting, and that men had been killed. Is that right?

Mr Francisco: (words not clear).

Mr Higgins: What is that?

Mr Francisco: (did not reply clearly).

Sir David Cuninghame: The witness seems to have an impediment in his speech.

Mr Simpson: The stupid bastard's terrified.

The Chairman: Sir David, your client is in danger of being cited for contempt.

Sir David: He is in greater danger than that, my lord.

Mr Francisco: Not see.

Mr Higgins: No you did not see anything. But you heard everything.

Mr Francisco: Yes.

Mr Higgins: Sir, I do not believe that this witness is

TRIAL

capable of answering any further questions. He is a stranger to our city, as you know, and he seems a little overawed.

The Chairman: Then in that case, I do not think we ought to trouble him any more, and we shall adjourn for today.

'I see where those two blacks spoke out,' said Mr Hancock. 'It's in the paper.'

'Is it, dear?'

'Heaven knows what they've been through. Treated no better than dumb brutes on that ship, as far as I can tell. You wouldn't think men could behave so.'

'No, you wouldn't.'

'Still, they're not dumb now. By God, they're not—Sorry, mother.' (For Mr Hancock was so old-fashioned as not to swear in the presence of ladies, not even of his wife.)

'That's all right, dear.'

'They've a bit of their own back now,' Mr Hancock said. 'What it says here—it says the testimony is irrefutable. That lot might have saved their necks, I dare say, if they'd treated the blacks a bit better.'

'Yes, I dare say,' said Mrs Hancock, 'Will you see if there's any music on the radio, dear?'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

THIRD DAY

EXTRACTS OF EVIDENCE

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM WOOD

Mr Wood: My name is William Wood. I am a journalist by occupation. On February 24th of this year, I was sitting in a restaurant and bar by the docks where I often go in search of copy. If I have no definite assignment, I often go there, because something interesting often turns up in the human interest line. So I was there that afternoon, and while I was there I saw and heard some of these sailors from this ship, the *Worcester*.

Mr Higgins: Can you identify them?

Mr Wood: Well, I can see them in this room, I think. They are sitting over there. Points to *Mr Stringman*, *Mr Haines* and *Mr Linstead*.)

Mr Higgins: Did you remember overhearing any of their conversation at this time?

Mr Wood: You could not help overhearing?

Mr Higgins: And what did they say?

Mr Wood: Oh, they were most unguarded. There was hardly a crime they hadn't committed at some time, according to them. Incest—

Lord Belhaven: Incest?

Mr Wood: One of them was saying—Well, it is a little embarrassing to repeat his words out loud, but he was speaking of his sister, and passing round photographs.

TRIAL.

Lord Belhaven: Do you have those photographs now? Maybe we ought to see them?

Mr Wood: Well, I did not actually see the photographs, but you could tell what type they were by the way the three men were sniggering and that.

Lord Belhaven: Abominable.

Mr Wood: Another of them was boasting of the murders he had committed. It was really gruesome to hear him. He was saying how he had slit the throats of—oh, I don't know how many people—you know, really boasting of it. Of course, he was drunk but in vino veritas, I always say. . . .

TESTIMONY OF MARY SETON

Mrs Seton: 'Kill or be killed,' he said. I was so shocked and frightened I didn't know where to turn, if you remember my own daughter had been walking out with him that afternoon, not to mention that we had company in the house. I told him to leave, but I will say he took his time about going. Since then, we've kept the doors and windows locked every evening, but we live in a deserted spot, as you may know, and I won't deny I'll feel safer when he's put away where he can do no harm. . . .

TESTIMONY OF HENRY HUDDLESDON

Mr Huddlesdon: When he put his coat on to go, I noticed the outline of a knife in his pocket. I didn't say anything, not wishing to distress the ladies or

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

to provoke him to any sort of violence, but I knew it was there.

Mr Higgins: A knife?

Mr Huddlesdon: Something big and bulky like a knife. He had his hand on it when he went out, I'll swear.

TESTIMONY OF JAMES WILKIE

Mr Wilkie: Well, I was interested in meeting one of these sailors, you see. So I got one of my friends to introduce me at a party we went to—

Mr Higgins: A party.

Mr Wilkie: Yes, one of my friends was giving a party at his house. And one of these sailors was there. I don't know who brought him. So I got my friend to introduce us, because I wanted to talk about my brother, you know.

Mr Higgins: Your brother?

Mr Wilkie: Well, yes; that's my brother, Barry. When I went into this hairdressing business, Barry thought he'd like to travel, you see, so he went as a steward on this ship, the *Speedy-Return*. And I thought this sailor might have met him. After all, they were both out east.

Mr Higgins: Yes?

Mr Wilkie: Well, my friend left us together, you see, and I asked this sailor about my brother. And I will say he behaved very strangely.

Mr Higgins: Strangely?

Mr Wilkie: Yes, he would hardly speak to me, and he was very rude. He sort of dried up, you know,

TRIAL.

and I'm sure I was being as pleasant as could be. And then he went over to this other sailor of that ship that was there, and I saw them pointing to me and talking to one another, and then they both left. I think they must have had something to hide, and they must have been frightened when I asked about my brother. I've thought a lot about it since. . . .

TESTIMONY OF JOHN BROWN

Mr Brown: I was the supervisor in charge of removing the cargo of the *Worcester* and stowing it in the Darien Company's warehouses until its disposal should be decided. This removal was carried out by members of the vessel's crew, but under the supervision of myself and my assistant. Mr Madder, the first mate, was also present.

Mr Higgins: Did you notice anything in particular about the condition of the cargo?

Mr Brown: I noticed that many cases were damaged; many were improperly marked. The cases and bales were most unevenly stowed. All over the place. It was not at all usual or proper.

Mr Higgins: Did you consider this a suspicious circumstance?

Mr Brown: I did. It showed either great carelessness or a wilful desire to confuse anyone examining the cargo. It was not at all in order.

Mr Higgins: Suppose that there had been a desire on the part of the captain to conceal the marks on the

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

'cases or to change them, would the condition in which you found them have been consistent with that?

Mr Brown: Yes, I suppose it would. Of course, some of the cases had no marks on them at all. Others had been damaged so that the marks were illegible. I suppose that if someone had wanted to obscure those marks, he might have damaged the cases.

Mr Higgins: Would this be the action of an honest man in your opinion?

Mr Brown: Well no. Of course not.

Mr Higgins: If those cases had been stolen or captured from some other vessel, might that explain the necessity for changing the marks?

Mr Brown: It would certainly be necessary to change them in that case. . . .

Mr Higgins: Did you also examine the ship's papers?

Mr Brown: In accordance with my instructions, I impounded all the documents having to do with the vessel's cargo, and all other papers that I could find. These included a number of personal letters, which I returned to Captain Green, and also a number of letters containing instructions from the owner, which I retained.

Mr Higgins: Can you produce them?

Mr Brown: Yes, I have them here. I think you will notice that in a number of these letters, the captain is instructed to use a simple code when in corre-

TRIAL

spondence with his owner. That is not generally done, I believe, and it seems to me a most suspicious circumstance.

Mr Higgins: A code?

Mr Brown: Yes, you will see here that he is instructed to communicate in code. . . .

* * *

'SECRET CODE'

FRESH EVIDENCE OF CONSPIRACY IN PIRATE CASE

It was revealed during today's Investigation that Captain Green, commander of the pirate vessel, the *Worcester*, used to communicate with his owners in a secret code. This evidence was given by John Brown of the Bureau of Customs, who searched the ship, found the code books, and broke the code.

Mr Brown also testified that the cargo of the ship consisted mostly of cases and bales taken from other vessels. The marks of these captured cases had been changed to conceal their identity. There were signs of a whole career of piracy in the *Worcester's* holds, and nobody knows how many ships she has sent to the bottom.

Other witnesses today told of conversations with sailors of the crew. These men, it was revealed, have convicted themselves many times over out of their own mouths. . . .

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

FOURTH DAY

At 10 a.m. the Court was called to order.

The Chairman: Well now, this is likely to be the last day of our session here in this case, and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all those witnesses who have appeared before us so far, and to hope that the remaining witnesses—that is your clients, Sir David—will be as co-operative. And I believe that we are first to hear from Captain Green, and is he in court?

Sir David Cuninghame: He is.

The Chairman: Now, Sir David, I want you to be quite clear about your position here, so that matters may proceed smoothly. You know that you are at liberty to consult with your clients at any time, and I hope you will do so whenever you think it necessary. But you are not an officer of this court as Mr Higgins is, and you may not put questions to your clients or to any other witnesses if it comes to that, or answer on their behalf, or place yourself in any way between them and us, and you may not address the court, because you have no position here. No position at all. We may even require you to leave if we should see fit. Do you understand that?

Sir David: I do, my lord.

The Chairman: What is that you have in your hand?

Sir David: It is a full statement for the record of my

TRIAL .

clients' position in this matter, sir. It makes everything clear.

The Chairman: I do not see the necessity for that. Captain Green and his men will be given the fullest opportunity to tell their own story for themselves. There was no need to write it down.

Sir David: There may be some difficulty about that.

The Chairman: Difficulty?

Sir David: As Captain Green understands it, sir, he is not subject to the jurisdiction of this Committee, and nor are his men. They are not natives of our city, and they are accused of no crime within the bounds of our sovereignty—

Mr. Higgins: We have been over all this.

Sir David: That is true. But Captain Green has been advised that the decision to over-rule us in this matter is, with respect, of very doubtful legality. He feels that he is protected by his foreign citizenship, and, if he were to comply with the forms of the Committee so far as to take the oath, he would seem to be renouncing that protection by acknowledging its jurisdiction.

The Earl of London: This is too deep for me.

Sir David: So, although Captain Green is quite prepared to put in the statement I have in my hand—and I may say that it is the fullest statement both of his legal position and of the facts of the incident alleged against him, and he is prepared to elucidate further on any points that the Committee may feel require it—although he would be happy to do

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

that, neither he nor any of my clients are prepared to take the oath or to appear to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Committee over them in any way.

The Chairman: This is ridiculous. They came here, didn't they? Isn't that acknowledgement enough?

Sir David: They were brought.

The Chairman: It's the same thing.

Sir David: Perhaps you would care to have me read Captain Green's statement into the record? He is able to point out a number of inconsistencies in the testimonies we have already heard, and also to clear up and explain the matters of fact that have been raised. It appears—

The Chairman: I have no intention of allowing this court to become a public platform for the expression of mere opinion. Captain Green, we have already made your position quite clear. When you have taken the oath as everyone else has done, we shall be ready to question you and to hear your answers on this matter.

Captain Green: I am afraid I must refuse to be sworn.

The Chairman: Must? There is no must about it. You are not obliged to refuse. Nobody here obliges you.

Captain Green: I cannot take the oath.

The Chairman: Do you mean you *will* not? Are you a Christian?

Captain Green: Yes.

The Chairman: Does the form of the oath collide with

TRIAL.

your religious beliefs in any way? There is an alternative form. You may make an affirmation.

Captain Green: My objection is not to the form, sir, but to the principle. I am not a citizen of your city, and I do not believe I am subject to your jurisdiction.

The Chairman: That is only your opinion. We have told you that you are. You have heard what has been said already on this subject?

Captain Green: Yes.

The Chairman: Then you know that your objections have no foundation.

Captain Green: I do not agree with that decision, sir, and I must refuse to take the oath.

The Chairman: I have told you already that there is no must about it. I will not put up with these musts from you. You mean that you *do* refuse.

Captain Green: Yes.

The Chairman: Then why not say so?

Captain Green: I must refuse, and I do refuse.

The Chairman: You know that, in the absence of any testimony from you and your men, the only testimony on which we can base our decision will be the testimony we have already heard?

Captain Green: The evidence you've already heard isn't enough to hang a dog on, even if it weren't already full of contradictions and improbabilities. Why would we take a sloop out to attack a vessel our own size? And who manned our own vessel while the sloop was packed with fighting men?

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

And how could we have carried on a three-day fight in such a small vessel anyway? And why was nobody wounded if the fight lasted that long, and why was no damage done to the ship?

The Chairman: That is enough.

Captain Green: How did we manage both to sell the cargo and bring it all back for your Mr Brown to discover? And what happened to our own cargo if what you've found is pirated stuff? Did that fool of a doctor hear guns for three days and never go to find out what happened? Could—

The Chairman: I have said that is enough. 'You are not here to make a speech. I have no doubt that there are perfectly reasonable explanations for all these apparent inconsistencies?

Mr Higgins: This piracy happened some two years ago, sir. It would be very strange if there were not a little conflict in the evidence. I regard the fact that there is such conflict as a further proof of the fundamental truth of the evidence we have heard.

The Captain: Now that you have heard Mr Higgins' rebuttal of your objections, perhaps you will be so good as to take the oath, tell your story in the proper way, and allow us to proceed with our business here, which is an Investigation, and not a Debate.

Captain Green: I am sorry. I must refuse.

The Chairman: You mean you do refuse?

Captain Green: I do refuse on the grounds that I have already stated.

TRIAL ,

(Being required to take the oath, the remaining members of the vessel, Worcester, also refused to do so, stating the same grounds for their refusal.)

The Chairman: This is most unsatisfactory. It seems to me that these men are wilfully refusing to tell us what they know of this matter. And if that is so, it also seems to me that they would not refuse to testify if they did not have something to hide. What are these men afraid of? Nobody would run to the protection of a minor legal point if he were not guilty, and looking for any chance to get off. An innocent man would come right out and state on oath that he was innocent.

Sir David Cuninghame: Sir, we have not made legal safeguards in order to denounce those who take advantage of them.

The Chairman: "Take advantage". There you have it, Sir David. It seems to me that these men are taking advantage of the law in order to take advantage of this Committee.

Sir David: That is not what I meant.

The Chairman: But it is what you said. It seems to me that the strongest presumption we have that these men are guilty of piracy is this—that they refuse to go into the witness box and state on oath that they are *not* pirates—a thing you would imagine that honest men would be proud and happy to do.

Now I am going to consult with my colleagues, the Assessors here who have been sitting with me,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

and I shall try to discover what is our opinion as a Committee on this question of piracy.

Sir John Howe: I have a question here. I'm not really a legal man, as you know, and during the last few days I have been reading up a bit about this business of piracy. And I see here where it says that there have to be two eye-witnesses before we can convict a man of being a pirate. Is that right? I mean, don't get me wrong, I'm as anxious as anyone to track down pirates, but I'd like to be sure about the position before we make up our minds.

The Chairman: Mr Higgins?

Air Higgins: There is a loop-hole in this case, sir, as you know. You may convict on 'undoubted presumption of guilt'.

Sir John: Well, that's all right then.

(The Chairman and the Assessors then retired, the court being re-convened on their return.)

The Chairman: Well now, we have consulted together, and I may as well say now that we are agreed that Captain Green and those of his men who refused to testify are pirates, and should be prosecuted as pirates. You are aware that we are not a court of justice in the strict sense, but a committee of investigation. We have no power to impose any sentence on these men. Since the proceedings of our committee have, however, come to be regarded by all responsible people as the equivalent of a trial, there is no reason why the time and money of government should be wasted on an-

TRIAL ,

other—after all, the members of any jury that found a man not guilty of piracy when we had already decided that he was, might reasonably be suspected of piracy themselves. We shall, therefore forward a transcript of the record in this case to the judiciary, and judgment will be given and the sentence pronounced in the usual way. We have no authority, of course, to say what that sentence should be, but I think your clients may take it, Sir David, that they will be hanged, which, under the circumstances, seems to me at once the most likely and the most proper punishment.

vi

APPEAL

*'Whenever you see a hearse go by,
Remember you are going to die.'*

'CAN'T you stop singing that?'
'I like to sing,' said Mr Stringman, 'it keeps me cheerful.'

The crew of the *Worcester* had been imprisoned uncomfortably six to a cell, with Green, Maddier and Simpson (who would be the first group to be hanged) in a cell by themselves. The sailors could not believe that the sentence would be carried out, but they were cramped, uneasy and frightened, and their confinement developed traits in them that not even life on board ship had been able to bring out.

Linstead had asked for a Bible, and sat reading for hours together in a corner. He read as he would a newspaper or a popular work of history, skipping the dull bits, reading other bits aloud to his cell-mates, and was particularly delighted when he taught God out on a chronological point. 'If you work it out,' he said, 'this Sarah was seventy years old when Pharaoh fell for her. How about that?'

Stringman had been in the habit of singing in the galley; he continued to sing in the cell. This irritated his cell-mates, Haines most of all, for Haines had begun to feel that Mr Stringman was more than any one else responsible for their present plight. It seemed to him, looking back over many a brawl and

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

many entanglements, that it was always Stringman who began the trouble, always George Haines who was punished. Like the others, George did not believe that the sentence would be carried out, but nor did he believe that it would not be; there were so many ways of offending Authority, and, since Authority made the rules, it must be presumed to know when they were broken. Maybe George had committed piracy without knowing it; maybe the officers of the *Worcester* had done so, and had kept the knowledge of it from the crew.

But the officers had no extra knowledge of the affair to conceal. During the days before the Investigation, Green had been visited regularly by his lawyers; they visited him no longer. For three days Green fretted and Simpson fumed, while Maddier lay silent on his bunk, making his escape for long hours into sleep. On the fourth day, the consul came calling, and brought with him a young dark gentleman whom he introduced as Mr Forbes.

'There was a Mr Forbes acting for us at the investigation,' said Green. 'He assisted Sir David Cunningham. I haven't seen him since.'

'That was Mr David Forbes,' said the consul. 'This gentleman is Mr Duncan Forbes. Mr Forbes—that is of course the other Mr Forbes—has left the city, I understand.'

'But that's impossible! There's so much to do.'

'Yes,' the consul said unhappily, 'I suppose there ought to be an appeal of some kind.'

APPEAL

'Appeal! But they'll have done that already. There must have been an appeal immediately after we were sentenced. It would be the first thing—'

'Most of the people who represented you publicly have had to leave,' Mr Forbes said.

'Leave?'

'You should not blame them. There has been a great deal of public feeling about this affair. If your lawyers were seen about the city, they would be in some personal danger.'

'What are we to expect then?' said Green bitterly, 'A lynching party?' The consul's manner at this question betrayed that something of the sort was in fact what he feared. Green said, 'I suppose you're anxious to end this visit before the mob breaks in.'

Mr Forbes said, 'I do not feel that you improve your position in any way by antagonizing your friends.'

'I'm sorry.'

'The consul and I have come here together to see what can be done for you. I myself have attended your investigation from the first day, and I believe that you are innocent.'

'Can anyone doubt it?' said Green, 'There was no proof, not a single piece of proof that we ever—'

'The Committee doubted it. They found you guilty.'

The consul said, 'That's really one of the things I wanted to talk to you about.'

'Yes?'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

'All this' feeling, you see, . . . And it makes my own position very difficult. . . . Of course, I dare say that you didn't really do anything wrong, but to say so only angers people. Diplomatically speaking, you see, it complicates our relations with these chaps. We don't want to make things any worse than they are, do we?

'What do you want us to do?'

'Well, I was wondering,' said the consul, 'whether it wouldn't be better to put in a full confession. I've known a confession work wonders; really, you might find yourself quite a lion. You'd have to say you're very, very sorry, and that you quite realize you were doing wrong, and you'll never do it again, and then appeal for mercy. I mean, you can see these people's point of view. It only aggravates them when you keep saying you're innocent—makes it look as though you were criticizing their judicial system.'

'But we *are* innocent.'

'My dear fellow, what difference does it make?' Nervous strain made the consul eloquent; his hands moved persuasively through the air. 'If only you'll admit everything, the appeal is bound to succeed. You'll be free. More than that, you can make yourself a rich man by writing a book about it—*I Was a Pirate* or *I Chose Not To Be a Pirate*—something like that. But if you insist on saying you're innocent, they'll hang you.'

'There is something in what the consul says,' said Mr Forbes. 'This is war-time after all. Our people

APPEAL

are upset and suspicious; opposition angers them. You might stand a better chance if you were to confess.'

'But justice—'

'Oh, justice!' said the consul.

Mr Forbes said, 'Who is concerned about abstract justice except the innocent man on his way to the scaffold?'

'I think you are,' said Green.

There was a silence in the cell. Then Mr Forbes said, 'Yes, I am. You are perceptive, captain. I am not concerned about you, or about your men; I do not know you. But I am a lawyer, and so I am concerned for the integrity of the law. I believe that you are innocent, and I believe that the law suffers when innocent men are condemned. The law is a living, growing thing, and it can be forced to grow in strange directions; it can be twisted. If you will ground your appeal on your innocence, I will act for you. But it is fair to tell you that I believe your chances are better if you do as the consul advises, and I believe that it would be fairer to your men if you were to tell them this.'

The consul was again made nervous. 'Oh, I wouldn't do that, he said. 'If any of them were to confess and you did not, things might be very awkward.'

'You would have to consider that possibility,' Mr Forbes said.

'I will consider it,' said Green, 'Shall I see you tomorrow?'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Mr Forbes smiled. 'I do not think we need imperil the diplomatic balance by asking your consul to be present,' he said, 'but I shall come.'

Mrs Bartlett had believed from the first in her lodger's innocence; as a gesture, she refused to re-let his room. She wrote angrily to *The Flying Post*; her letters were not printed. So, borrowing phrases where she could from Mrs Mary Baker Eddy's work, she drafted a petition, and set out to collect signatures.

It was her habit to do her shopping at the corner store at about eleven every morning, and so, on the Wednesday after the investigation, she took her petition with her in the shopping basket.

The store seemed unusually full; she recognized a number of neighbours by the counter. They turned to look at her as she came in, but they said nothing.

'Good morning,' Mrs Bartlett said. None of the people in the store replied.

It did not seem a good moment to begin on the matter of the petition. Mrs Bartlett went up to the counter. 'Do you have any curly kale?' she said. The storekeeper was silent. 'Well, yes, I see you have,' she said, 'I'll take a pound.'

The storekeeper did not move to get the kale. One of the ladies in the store, her face red, said, 'You'll get no service here.'

Another said, 'We hear you got a pirate to your roomer.'

APPEAL,

Mrs Bartlett faced the women, her back against the counter. 'He's as innocent as the unborn day,' she said.

From behind her, the storekeeper said, 'You better get out of my store, Mrs Bartlett.' He left the counter, and walked over to the door to open it. 'We don't want your kind,' he said, 'I'm only telling you for your own good.'

'Pirate lover!' one of the women said. As Mrs Bartlett turned to leave the store, the women all began to hiss, comically in concert like dowdy geese in their Sunday hats, and, when Mrs Bartlett put up her hand to shield her face from the passers-by, she was surprised to discover that she was crying.

Some hundred miles from the city, in another country, two sailors sat in a cheap café. They ate egg and chips from cracked plates, using knives and forks of a light dull metal; the table was without a cloth. They were men of no special beauty or intelligence; one had acne; both were unshaven rather than bearded. Exciting events occur to sailors, but sailors are not often exciting people, and these were not. During the past year, their vessel had first been captured by pirates, and then sunk. They themselves had been enrolled in the pirate crew, had found the life exhausting, and had escaped; they had served since in a number of ships, always making their way closer to their home port, and one more voyage,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

they considered, would see them there. Their names were Israel Phippany and Peter Freeland. A long time ago they had sailed from the city in the *Speedy Return*. They had never heard of the *Worcester*, or of Captain Green, or of any of his men. They were a living proof of Green's innocence, but they did not read the papers, and could not tell that they had been murdered with hatchets by the *Worcester's* crew. And they were, besides, still a long way from the City.

In a different quarter of the town from that in which the sailors ate egg and chips, the situation of the *Worcester* was causing much disquiet. Accounts of the affair had been given more and more prominence in the daily newspapers. 'SAVE OUR LADS' was the headline in the *Mirror*; 'LEGALITY IMPUGNED . . .' began the sonorous trumpet of the *Times*; 'OUR MURDEROUS ALLIES' the *Worker* screamed; UNFORTUNATE MISUNDERSTANDING . . . mourned the *Guardian*. Captain Thomas Bowrey, the owner of the *Worcester*, gave a fighting interview to *Picture Post*; his lawyers worked actively for a stay of execution, performing the finest legal arabesques among the diplomatic undergrowth. In the Legislative Assembly, questions were asked and speeches made.

Harried by the press and in the Assembly, the Government was also under pressure from the Crown. Queen Anne had expressed, and continued to express, a deep personal anxiety for the crew of the *Worcester*. 'The Queen is unable to understand,'

APPEAL

she wrote, "how it can be justified in law that her subjects should be put in peril of their lives by the courts of a foreign power, even if it were *morally* justifiable to hang an innocent man." ('Innocent men, my love,' said her husband. 'There are seventeen, I understand,' but Her Majesty, reading over what she had written, decided that the sentence balanced better as it was.) The Treasurer observed gloomily that it was this kind of situation that made a man regret he had ever left the Stock Exchange. His temperament was never cheerful. Though he clung to power, it was with the possessiveness of a jealous lover over the mistress he had ceased to desire. His dreams were haunted with loss, and the threat of expulsion; banner headlines, each bigger than the last, melted into one another and he could hear the newsboys crying in the street, 'GODOLPHIN MUST GO.'

The consul's situation reports were felt to be inadequate. When the crew had first been arrested, he had attempted to play the whole affair down, and the Government felt that much time had been lost by this. Arrangements were made to have the consul transferred to a port in the yellow fever belt of East Africa, where, two years later, he died, and his widow married an Arab trader with black teeth and revolting habits. Meanwhile, one of the brighter Under Secretaries was accredited to the Council of the city. It was felt that to despatch anyone of higher rank would involve the Government too deeply in case of failure—'Not even the *Mirror*', said Lord

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Godolphin, 'could expect us to go to war with an ally.' To the Under Secretary himself, he said merely, 'I am sure that you will be able to come to some agreement. Promise nothing.' Under these instructions, and with a brief-case filled with reports and minutes of evidence, the Under Secretary set off by air for the city.

'NO INTERFERENCE' was the front-page headline of Mr Hancock's evening paper. 'Do you see that, mother?' he said, 'they're sending some Under Secretary to teach us our business. I must say it doesn't seem very friendly after a fair trial and all.'

'Call themselves allies!' said the tubicund shoe salesman. 'Crawl to us for help quick enough when they're in trouble, and then tell us how to run our own city. Allies! The war'd be over by now if we'd been allowed to run it our way—one quick push with no holds barred—The way things are, it's like fighting with one hand tied behind your back. I've seen some fighting in my time,' he said, 'and I know.'

'Who is this Lord Ridgeway they're sending, anyway?' they said in the taverns and clubs. 'The way it says here, he isn't even a member of the Cabinet.' So it was inevitable that the Under Secretary should find the words, 'GO HOME, RIDGEWAY' chalked on the wall outside the airport.

APPEAL

'Well, it is interesting, isn't it?' said Captain Bowrey's secretary, Mildred, 'when it happens to someone you know?'

It was many years since Thomas Bowrey had been to sea, though he still kept a close interest in the practice of seamanship, and his instructions, his captains complained, were often more detailed than was decent. He was a genial hearty man, curiously like Mr Mackenzie in his manner, and—again like Mr Mackenzie—he preferred to conduct much of his business over food or a drink, so that he was not often in the office. He would not, in any case, have objected to the presence of his secretary Mildred's girl-friend, Anne, who often dropped in for a good talk in the afternoons.

'Anyway,' said Mildred, 'Beryl doesn't like to be on her own, only she'd have been all right, you see, except for me being rung up like that; we always go together, you know. And then when I got home, it was only a window someone had left open in the spare room, and it kept banging, you see, and that's what frightened auntie; she gets very nervous at nights. I'd never have left her alone, but I thought Harold would be back; he never stays long, you know. But then it was late too to get back to Beryl, not that she likes to be on her own, as I say.'

'You never left her to go home alone?'

'No, that was the thing, you see. Because when I rang up, she'd already left with this sailor.'

'Mildred!'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

'Well, I was surprised, I must say, knowing Beryl so well. And I said to her—you know, jokingly—when I saw her I said: "Where were *you*?" I said, because of course I knew there was nothing wrong, and then it all came out.'

'About the sailor?'

'Yes. He was ever so well-spoken, she says, and when I left he came up and asked Beryl for a bit of a dance, and she said: "Yes", so of course they got talking.'

'Well?'

'Well, that was how it came out, you see. Because he told her his name—Israel something—not a Jew, dear, but his father was religious or something. And he told her all about being captured by pirates, and of course she didn't take much notice, thinking it was just a line, you see. But he kept going on about his adventures; Beryl said it was as good as a play, really interesting, only she couldn't help thinking he was rather conceited. Then he asked her if she wanted a drink, and Beryl said: "Just a coffee for me, thank you," the way she does, because Beryl doesn't drink, you know, or anything like that, and naturally she didn't want him getting ideas, and then he introduced her to this friend of his with the spots, and it all came out.'

'About—'

'Well, about them being off this ship, you see.'

'The pirate ship?'

'No, she knew all about that; they'd run away from

APPEAL

that. But they were off this other ship, only those people have been saying our boys sunk it—in the papers, dear, you must have seen it, let alone the fuss it's been causing me; I've had to start a new file for all the lawyers' letters, I'm sure, though you can't help feeling sorry for them, locked up like that. And of course Beryl knew all about it because of me working here, and she was in the office just where you're sitting when Captain Green came in for his orders, and took ever such a fancy to him. No, these sailors were off that *Speedy Return* ship.'

'The one—?'

'Yes, that one. And they know our captain never did it, because they told Beryl who did, you see, and it was quite a different name, only they didn't know about all the fuss, you see, because they've only been in town a day, and they don't read the papers.'

'Got something better to do, I expect.'

'Not with Beryl; she wouldn't stand for it, I know. But she got ever so excited when she heard, and didn't want to leave them until she knew where they lived. So that's why she'd already gone home with them when I rang up.'

'What happened when they took her home?'

'Well, dear, Beryl didn't say, but I'm sure it was all right. She's going out with the other one tonight—Peter is his name—the one with spots, and she wouldn't be doing that if anything had been wrong.'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

When Captain Green passed on the consul's advice to his men, they did not believe him. They were not subtle thinkers; their training had not made them so. Confessing to a crime they had not committed seemed to them a very foolish way to escape the penalty of it. As far as he could, Green tried to explain the consul's reasoning. Most of them took very little stock of it; a few of them thought that Green, by trying to persuade them to confess, hoped to save his own life.

This was Stringman's theory; George Haines believed it. Brooding over his captain's duplicity, George was told that there was a visitor to see him. Anne Seton (though he had not known it) had long been trying to visit him, and Mr Mackenzie, for reasons of his own, had now been able to arrange it.

George was taken from his cell with the others to the visiting room where Anne awaited him. She was seated behind a grille on the high stool provided for visitors; the prisoners stood. When Anne saw George she stood up as well. 'Hullo, George,' she said.

George said, 'Hullo, Anne.'

They stood in silence on opposite sides of the grille, and after a while Anne sat down again. 'I've been trying to see you every day,' she said.

'You'd no need.'

'I didn't know what to do. Sometimes I thought it was all our fault in a way. But mother didn't say anything that wasn't the truth.'

APPEAL

'If that's all you came to say, you might as well have saved your breath.'

'It's not all,' said Anne breathlessly. 'I came here to save you.'

George looked at her unbelievably. She had been pretty when first he saw her with her mother in the church, but now she seemed thinner, and her nose was red, and her hands shook. He could not feel hope.

'It's because of me being ill,' she said. 'They think it's T.B., and I had to go to hospital to have this X-ray. And they couldn't spare an ambulance to take me back all that way, you see, and it was so cold. And so Mr Mackenzie—that's Dr Mackenzie's brother, the one that gave evidence—he was there, and he said he'd drive me home, you see.'

'Yes.'

'So then when we got home, I had to ask him in for tea. Mother was there. And he told her how she—she spoke up at the investigation, George, and how she was right to do it, and public-spirited and that. And he said it was a pity the innocent should have to suffer with the guilty, and how he was sure there wasn't any real harm in you, George, and I said I knew there wasn't, and that made mother angry.'

'If you've got T.B.,' said George, 'they'll send you away.'

'He says it'll be all right if you confess. He says if you can show how you didn't really want to do it,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

and the others made you, and how—how your eyes are opened now—he says you only need to write a draft, and sign it, and give it to the warder as a letter to me, and then you'll be taken out of prison, and they'll help you write it out properly.' Anne began to weep. 'Oh George,' she said, 'if only you'd tell them the truth. Tell them it was the others and not you. I know they wouldn't hang you.'

George found that his throat was dry. 'You mustn't ask me,' he said, but he had difficulty in speaking. He began to feel that a man might pay too high a price for shielding his friends.

'Time's up. I'm sorry,' said the warder.

'You'll have to go,' George said, 'I'll think about it.'

'Promise me you will, George,' said Anne. 'Mr Mackenzie says they'll be so helpful. They don't want to hurt you. He says they wouldn't punish anyone innocent. They only want to catch the pirates.' The warder held the door open, and she left the room.

Anne's distress was not feigned. Out of a mistaken notion of what the situation demanded, she walked back to the cottage on the headland, a solitary figure in the heavy rain. She was wet, chilled, and a little feverish when she reached home. Eventually a letter came from the hospital to say that the X-ray had revealed no sign of tuberculosis infection in her chest, but by that time she had contracted pleurisy from the wetting, which in its turn became bronchial pneumonia, and so she died. George was enabled to

APPEAL

attend the funeral in borrowed blacks, for his confession was already before the Privy Council, which had to consider at the same time the affidavits of Israel Phippany and Peter Freeland, copies of which had been submitted to them by Lord Ridgeway.

‘FORGED DOCUMENTS IN PIRATE CASE?’

Not many of the readers of *The Flying Post* attached any significance to the question mark. Nor did the *Post*'s leader writers. Coming with Haine's confession, the affidavits seemed to them to be a deliberate impertinence.

The *Post* could not understand why the Privy Council should bother to consider them at all. ‘*Lord Ridgeway's dangerous and irresponsible meddling,*’ the leader ran, ‘*bids fair to wreak havoc in the friendly relations that have existed between his country and ourselves. His Queen has been deceived by the mischievous and palpably forged contrivance of the pirate sympathizers within her gates, but we venture to suggest that the deception would not have been as easily successful if our ally had been at pains to root out from the first the pirates and privateers who are known to lurk in her seaports. You cannot condole piracy, and it is dangerous to try.*’

On an inside page, the Features Editor of the *Post*, who had just returned from an extensive seven-day tour of the city's allies, wrote of his experiences:

‘*I said to one man I met on a bus: "What do you think of this Green case?"*’

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

His answer was much as I had expected, and showed the usual prejudices.

'Well,' I said, 'tell me this. Have you read the complete text of the trial?'

He confessed that he had not.

'No,' I said, 'it has not been published in your newspapers. And yet that text is available to any citizen of any country of the whole world, who will take the trouble to write in to the Publications Department of our Government, enclosing sufficient money for postage, and ask for it. How many have done so? There is too much uninformed criticism of our country by foreigners.'

The man seemed abashed, and shortly afterwards left the bus!

But in the Privy Council, the affidavits could not be dismissed so lightly. Lord Godolphin, after all, had been fully conscious of the diplomatic reverse he would suffer if the two seamen should be discovered to be lying. Phippany and Freeland had been questioned, cross-questioned, and re-questioned; their story had been checked and checked again. Photographs of both men had been sent with the affidavits, and the police confirmed to the Council that Mrs Freeland recognized her son, and Mrs Phippany (though with some consternation, for she had married again) her husband. It did not seem likely that the affidavits were forgeries. On the other hand, as Mackenzie's friends on the Council pointed out, there was Haines' confession.

The discussion went on, and ended in indecision.

APPEAL

It was decided to suspend the execution of the first batch of prisoners, Green, Maddier, and Simpson, until the new evidence had been further considered. If necessary, there might have to be a full-dress trial, at which Maines, Phippany, and Freeland would all be called as witnesses. So did the Councillors postpone the matter.

Grace Mackenzie noticed that since the Investigation her two Indians had become increasingly indolent. Their work about the house was scamped and slovenly; when they were not in their own room over the garage, crouched close to a smelly oil-stove, they seemed to spend most of their time at the cinema on free passes. Further, Antonio Ferdinando had on two occasions been discovered to have stolen marmalade from the pantry. It was not as if the Indians were ill-fed, Grace Mackenzie said, and one must call a halt somewhere; Ferdinando ate marmalade by itself with a teaspoon from the pot.

Losing your temper, she complained to Roderick Mackenzie, did no good at all. The Indians would keep silent and avoid her eyes. After she had left the room, they would giggle between themselves; she had heard them. They were sullen and disobedient, and a great trial to her, she said, standing in Mr Mackenzie's office, her face red and her hands clasped before her. She would have no more of it; the Indians would have to be sent away.

‘ THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

‘You must not say so, Grace,’ said Mr Mackenzie.
‘Send them to me and I will talk with them.’

So the two Indians, Ferdinando and Francisco, came to call late one afternoon. Neither of them looked to be a match for Mr Mackenzie as they faced him, encompassed in the top-coats and scarves provided for them by the deacon’s wife. Both suffered dismally from the cold; their eyes ran and their noses dripped. What a business it is, Mr Mackenzie thought what a silly business that such people should take toll of a man’s time and patience. ‘Well now,’ he said jovially, ‘what’s this I hear, eh?’

‘The two Indians said nothing.

‘You have been having a little trouble in the house, I am told,’ said Mr Mackenzie.

‘No, sir. No trouble, sir.’ The Indians’ coats were damp, and had begun to steam in the heat of the room.

‘You are not unhappy, then?’

‘Not unhappy, sir.’

‘My cousin’s wife tells me that you have been stealing from the pantry.’

‘Not stealing, sir.’

‘Marmalade.’

There was no reply.

‘She says you have been taking marmalade from the pantry.’

‘Ferdinando said, ‘I do not think you will be mis-grudging me sweets, sir, when we have performed such services.’

APPEAL

‘Services?’

‘What will become of us, sir? Where shall we go? We do good service for you, sir. You give us nothing.’

‘You have a free pass to every cinema in town.’ Mr Mackenzie regretted the words as soon as he had spoken them, but Ferdinando took immediate advantage.

‘Yes, sir, for such services you give us only this thing. In my country, we would have many rupees for such services.’

‘I do not know what service you mean,’ said Mr Mackenzie. ‘It is I who have done you good service by finding you a home and food. And entertainment. You have done nothing for me.’

‘We have spoken for you, sir, against our captain.’

‘You have only told the truth in open court. That was your duty.’

‘We have spoken for you, sir.’

‘You have told the truth.’ Mr Mackenzie was not certain how to proceed, and the Indians were quick to detect the uncertainty in his voice. ‘If it were discovered that you had said what is *not* true,’ he said, speaking with care, ‘you might be punished for it. You might be put in prison.’

‘Our captain is in prison, sir.’

‘Yes.’

‘I am not happy for that, sir, in my mind. I think there are other things I now remember, sir.’

‘It is your duty to speak out, of course.’

‘You will help me, sir? My friend, Mr Francisco,

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

is cold here, sir. 'He is needing new clothing, and money to buy sweetmeats which we may not take.'

Mr Mackenzie looked out of the window at his side. He could see the high walls of the prison on one side; below him was the public square, where a granite plinth commemorated the dead of past wars, and where, on important occasions, military parades were held. Across the square was the entrance to a subway station; already, as shops and offices closed for the day, the square and the streets that bordered it began to fill with people bound for the subway and their homes. Close to the station was a van. This van had a loudspeaker on the roof; it was the sort of vehicle that is often used during elections, to roam the streets, broadcasting political slogans and advice. As the first large drift of people reached the subway station, the loudspeaker began to broadcast, and this is what it said:

'Citizens! Today the Privy Council has decided not to proceed with the execution of the pirates. This news is presented as a public service.'

'Come here!' said Mr Mackenzie to the two Indians. 'Come and look out of this window.'

In the square, people stopped and turned towards the van; soon the square was filled with people. Then the voice from the van, which had been doing no more than to repeat the announcement went on to add that the Chancellor was expected to leave the Chancery at five-thirty, and that a deputation from the Old Soldiers' League would meet him at the

APPEAL

Chancellor's steps. There they would present a petition praying that justice be done and the execution carried out as soon as possible.

• 'It is almost that time now,' said Mr Mackenzie. 'If you have anything you wish to say to the Chancellor, perhaps you had better go down and ask to speak to him before he makes any rash promises.' The two Indians were silent.

The Chancellor's car entered the square from the south end; perhaps he had left early, and so missed seeing the petitioners. The car was a Cadillac; it bore on the bonnet a pennant embroidered with the arms of the city. Halted in the jam of traffic, it was immediately recognized by those who stood near it. 'There he is,' they cried. 'There's the Chancellor,' and the words ran through the crowd, confused and repeated, and the people began to move (in so far as they could move in so confined a space) towards the car. Almost immediately the loudspeaker van took up its chant again, saying: 'It is reported that the Chancellor did not see the petitioners. He left before they had a chance to arrive. The execution of the pirates will not now take place.' ('There is no demagoguery here, you see,' said Mr Mackenzie at the window. 'It is all plain objective reporting.')

• People had spilled out on to the road, and all traffic was stopped. The crowd was swept by curious ripples of movement, and, caught in these, some people were thrown a little off balance. One woman lost her hat. 'My hat!' she screamed. 'That's right,'

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

shouted a man at some distance from her. 'What do they think they're doing?' He snatched an umbrella from the man next to him, and threw it at the Cadillac. Soon the air seemed full of umbrellas and sticks, which rebounded harmlessly from the thick windows of the automobile.

In the front of the crowd was Jim Dain, a broker's clerk. He was a thin tense person, who lived alone; on the evenings that he did not spend at the movies, he read action stories in the True-Life magazines, or lay on his bed spinning for himself fantasy adventures of violence and crime. One of the thrown umbrellas hit him on the head. He cried out: 'Not like that,' and, taking the umbrella struck violently against a side window. Dain was not strong, and this was striking in a confined space; the window did not break, but his example was heeded. Scrunched up in the middle of the back seat to avoid the sticks and broken glass, Chancellor Seaforth cried: 'Stop! Stop! Let me come out.'

Daylight had gone by now, and, as the Chancellor was pushed up on to the roof of the car, he was illuminated by the strong neon lights above him. He raised his hand for silence; it was like the mockery of benediction. 'What do you want?' he said. 'Hang them!' called a man, who wore the lapel-button of the Old Soldiers' League, and isolated voices in the crowd also called out, 'Hang them!' 'Murderers!', 'Hang the pirates!'

Another Old Soldier had reached the loudspeaker-

APPEAL

van, and taken over the microphone; burps and odd noises as he adjusted it compelled the crowd's attention. 'You hear me, Chancellor Seaforth,' he said, 'I am a veteran and a tax-payer, and I want to tell you that we've had enough shilly-shallying here in this city. If you'd hanged those pirates when you caught them, you'd have saved yourself this trouble.'

Against the loudspeaker the Chancellor's voice was thin. Even at first, it did not reach more than a third of the people, and protests of 'I can't hear', and 'What did he say?' started from the back of the crowd, and ran forward like a counter-wave. Soon the Chancellor could not be heard at all, and the whole crowd, distraught and dangerous in the lamplight, was shouting and waving hats, sticks, parcels, umbrellas, and despatch cases. Again the people were hushed by the loudspeaker. 'Can that crap!' it said. (Emily Hughes, a schoolteacher, found a shocked pleasure in the word, said like that aloud in public, and repeated, 'Crap, crap,' several times to herself.) 'Can that!' said the loudspeaker. 'The will of the people makes the law, Chancellor. That's what it says in the Constitution, and we've shown you what our will is. Maybe the police can get you out of this now, but you know what the will of the people is, and I'm telling you—You better take care.'

A squadron of police had already arrived on foot. 'Break it up!' they said. 'Come on now. Break it up!' The crowd began to spill away into side-streets, and this gave the police room enough to form a kind of

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

line. At a command from their superior, they adjusted gas masks. 'You don't have to do that,' a man said angrily. 'We're going.' Then the first tear-gas bomb hit the road, and soon the people on that side of the square were coughing and weeping. Most affected of all were the people in the cars, who could not move and had not thought to close their windows. Among these was the Chancellor himself.

The rest of the crowd dispersed as it could. Among those who, shocked and angry, moved homeward, was Mr Hancock. He had found himself shouting; he had thrown something (it was a carton of sugar, the loss of which he would have to explain); he had slashed about him as he could with his umbrella and, had he been near enough to the Chancellor's car, would certainly have broken a window. He knew himself not to be a violent man, and he was troubled; it was, he felt obscurely, an addition to the pirates' crime that they should have made him behave so badly. He decided not to mention the matter to his wife.

The crowd dispersed. The loudspeaker van drove away and took the Old Soldier with it; he seemed to be on excellent terms with its occupants. Mr Dain the clerk and Miss Hughes the teacher went each to their separate and lonely rooms. The traffic jam broke at last; the cars moved on; the square was deserted.

Mr Mackenzie stepped from the window into the centre of the room. 'Of course you must do as you think best,' he said to Ferdinando. 'If you have any-

APPEAL

thing to add to your evidence, you should certainly do so before it is too late. 'Though I do not think it will make much difference to the result.' He opened the door of his office, and pressed a bell for the secretary to show them out. 'Meanwhile,' he said, 'I shall try to make other arrangements for you.'

In a room of her empty house, Mrs Bartlett sat alone. The blinds were drawn over her windows, less for privacy than as a protection against draughts; most of her windows no longer had glass in them. She spent much of her time alone now, but her mind was firm in the face of adversity; she still believed in her lodger's innocence, and morning and evening she prayed for him.

The elderly twitching gentleman, Mr Mackenzie's acquaintance, walked in the public park, loitering by thick clumps of laurel and near the soldiers who sat alone on park benches. When the soldiers were joined by girls, the elderly twitching gentleman would move on, holding himself tightly together inside his black topcoat. Littering the paths of the park were drifts of evening newspapers. The elderly twitching gentleman took one, and sat down by himself on a bench. 'KITCHEN TRAGEDY', he read, 'NATIVE WITNESSES POISONED'.

'WITNESS DEAD IN PIRATE CASE', said the morning papers, as Chancellor Seaforth sat at breakfast. Surely, he thought, that should read 'Witness in

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

Pirate Case Dead'; the line did not *sound* a, well, of course, in his emendation, but it conveyed the meaning more accurately. The story below was one of those misunderstandings that, sad as they can be in their results, yet cannot help seeming a little silly to the casual reader. One of the two Indians was dead. The deacon's wife, his hostess had (the Chancellor read) for long suspected that rats were stealing food from her pantry. She had dosed an open and half-empty jar of marmalade with poison; inadvertently the Indian had eaten it. Even when the pains began and an antidote might yet have saved him, the Indian and his companion had remained hidden in their attic, saying nothing, and he had died there. His companion had since disappeared.

Well, it was sad, but irrelevant to the decision before the Council. There could be no question of a formal trial; a vote to suspend execution would amount to a vote for reprieve. Since the riot in the square, the Chancellor had found himself believing less and less in the truth of Haines' confession. If the Council were to allow time for the two sailors, Freeland and Phippany, to return and testify, Haines would withdraw his confession soon enough. Justice would be done, the Chancellor thought gloomily; a terrible miscarriage would be averted.

They had smashed the windows of his car. He had seen them—respectable members of the middle classes, voters, office workers—behaving like crazy people; one man had thrown a pound of lump sugar.

APPEAL,

They would hold him responsible if the pirates were to be freed; even when it had become generally accepted that the men were innocent, the voters would feel aggrieved; they would feel cheated, disappointed, angry. And what, in any case, might they do when first they heard of a reprieve? Then starched white collars and celluloid cuffs would be stained with blood; umbrellas would mingle with cleavers as they broke into the jail itself to lynch, not the pirates only, but innocent pickpockets, arsonists, fraudulent accountants, all the helpless unhappy riff-raff of the cells. What greater damage might be done then, how many lives be lost? Expedience, the Chancellor thought; it is a matter of expedience. Whether we suspend execution or no, the people are incensed; the pirates will die. By hanging them in form—by hanging, perhaps, only the officers as scapegoats for the rest—we shall be saving a much greater loss of life. And yet I know they are not guilty; it is a terrible thing to condemn the innocent.

Greater pain, thought the Chancellor, wiping the egg from his mouth with a linen napkin, can no man suffer; that he should do an evil act for the good that must come of it. Well, not evil exactly. Perhaps it would be better to stay away from Council altogether. . . .

The same thought had occurred to a number of other Councillors, he noticed as he entered the Conference Room, and they had acted upon it. Of the

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US
full roll, only twelve besides himself were present.
'It is a treacherous season, I see,' he said, smiling.

'I beg your pardon, Chancellor.'

'It is the treacherous time of year. So much illness.
So many absences.'

'Perhaps it would be better to adjourn, Chancellor,
until some happier time.'

The Chancellor considered the suggestion.

'The execution would then, of course, proceed as
arranged,' observed the man who had spoken.

'The execution would not then, of course take
place,' said a man of the opposite party almost simul-
taneously.

'I really don't see—'

'How can you possibly imagine—'

'Gentlemen! Gentlemen!' said the Chancellor. 'We
have no other business before us that might not
easily be postponed. But on this matter of the execu-
tion, where postponement itself is the issue on which
we have to decide, we are forced to a decision. We
are not required at this time to listen to any fresh
evidence or to hear submissions from either side. It
is not a matter that we may even discuss further with
any profit. We have had, each of us, a period of two
days to consider the evidence and arguments we have
heard, and to come to our individual conclusions. I
must now ask you, each of you, *how* you have con-
cluded.' He turned to the Councillor at his right.
'How, sir,' he asked, 'are you decided?'

'That we must proceed with the execution.'

APPEAL

When all had spoken, there were six for execution and six for delay. Up to the last moment, Chancellor Seaforth had hoped that he would not be forced to vote. 'Perhaps we should vote again,' he said.

'Your voice must decide between us, Chancellor.'

The Chancellor sighed. 'I am a humane man,' he said. 'I must make the most truly humane decision. The execution will proceed.'

VII

EXECUTION

'Being come to the place of execution, good God what a moving sight was it to see those men stand upon the very verge of life, just launching into eternity, and at the same time see the whole multitude transported with joy.'

An eyewitness to the execution,
quoted in G. M. TREVELYAN, *op. cit.*

MR. AND Mrs. Hancock had been unable to get anybody to sit with the children, so they decided to watch the execution at home on T.V.

They sat in twin armchairs with a pot of coffee and some butter cookies between them. It was to be a long programme, they knew. The camera was to pick up the procession as it formed in the prison yard, and to follow it to the sands three miles away, where public gibbets had been erected. Viewers would, it was promised, be able to witness all the last formalities, and to hear the prisoner's last words. The well-known firm of brewers which was sponsoring the telecast had announced, indeed, that people watching their programme would see more than those actually present.

'Well, viewers,' the announcer said, 'here we are at the prison gates,' and there they were, sure enough, with the crowd outside. The gates had not yet been opened, and people were jam-packed in the street—families with picnic baskets, old men in dark suits and young men in painted ties, girls escorted and un-

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

escorted, even (the Hancocks noticed) a middle-aged woman with a perambulator. The camera moved about, picking them out group by group and one by one. Many, when they noticed it turned upon them, grinned and waved; one boy shouted: 'Come on in. The water's fine.' It was a friendly happy crowd, looking forward to the spectacle.

'There are certainly a lot of people here today,' the announcer said, 'and not a cloud in the sky. I certainly hope it keeps that way. We don't want to spoil those pretty dresses, do we?'—The camera swooped in suddenly upon a girl in a brightly coloured dress, who screamed and flapped her hands hysterically—'No, indeed,' the announcer said, 'we certainly don't want to do that. Well, we'll come back to the folk outside here—all you grannies and aunties watching at home—because I know you want to see more of them, but right now we're going into the prison yard, right in there with the sheriff, where Edward Bantam is watching the scene of events. Come in, Edward.'

The prison walls were high and grey. Much of the courtyard lay in shadow, but the open truck in which the prisoners were to be transported had been conveniently placed in bright sunlight. The sheriff's car would drive in front; it was a black Cadillac that flew, for the occasion, a pennant embroidered with the arms of the city. To one side, three jeeps were parked. The first, loaded with armed policemen, would head the procession, Mr Bantam explained, the second

EXECUTION

similarly would end it; the third was for the three executioners—members of the Old Soldiers' League selected by a popularity poll which had been conducted by a well-known Sunday newspaper.

On the truck with the prisoners there would be three guards, Duncan Forbes, the prisoners' lawyer, and a minister. It had been difficult to induce a minister to undertake this duty. Most of those asked had felt that it was unwise to be too closely associated with men known to be pirates. Their presence in the truck might be taken to show sympathy with the men, and so with piracy itself. A number had asked to be excused, although the authorities had pointed out that there was, in fact, no need to show any sympathy at all with the prisoners. The presence of a minister was no more than formal; he might stand at the other end of the truck and disassociate himself altogether from the condemned men. Indeed, he might use the occasion to deliver some sort of homily on the moral decay that leads to piracy. While the ministers approached were still debating this, a Catholic priest had volunteered, with no such reservations, for the duty, and *faute de mieux* had been accepted.

'Can I come in now, Edward?' the first announcer asked. 'They're getting impatient out here.' Now the Hancocks were able to see something of a crowd already beginning to be restive; the procession was late in starting. As more people had arrived outside the gates, the crush and the heat had begun to affect

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

everyone there. A stall that sold cold drinks and small workable gibbets for the children had been knocked over. Several couples had become separated, and were calling anxiously to each other. 'There's your little girl, Madam,' the announcer said encouragingly as the camera spotted the flushed face and grubby print dress of some lost Felicity, but the child's mother lacked the advantages given to viewers by the makers of Hotzy Beer, and could not hear him.

Back in the courtyard, the prisoners were being loaded on to the truck, the sheriff into his Cadillac.

A squad of guards went forward to open the gates and clear a way. For a time it looked as if the procession would not be able to start, so crowded were the people. As the gates opened, many of those in front were forced into the courtyard. Then the guards, quietly and with a minimal use of force, managed to push them back, and to open up enough of a way for the first jeep, which opened thereafter a way of its own. The crowd pressed back against walls and into doorways. A shop-window broke, and those cut by the glass lay among the wax mannequins and bled. One woman, caught for viewers by the camera's eye, fainted and was held up by the press to find her.

The truck began to move, and the faces of the crowd changed, becoming spiteful and ugly. One man tried to throw a stone, but there was no room for that, and it missed its mark. A demure youth,

EXECUTION

dark-haired and a little sulky, called out: 'Why don't you go back where you came from?' and this cry was taken up and lost in others, so that soon there was only a wordless shouting in which the voice of the announcer was drowned. All the way through the streets of the city this shouting continued, because although, as the truck passed them, the people fell into line behind it at an increasingly greater distance, there were always more to pass, until at last these also were marching behind, and now the jeeps and the Cadillac went to right and left, and there were only wide sands before the truck, and a silence around it.

The television screen may give its patrons an excellent view of what is going on, but it cannot as easily transmit the infection of emotion, so that Mr and Mrs Hancock had felt themselves a little detached from these proceedings. But as the crowd, which had for so long filled the screen, became again bounded by space, and could be seen as so much smaller than the sea and the sands on which it stood, Mr Hancock looked sideways at his wife, and observed that she was weeping. 'I can't help it,' she said, 'Whenever I see the waves come in like that, I have to think of our Billy.'

The truck drove up to a stage on which three gibbets had been erected. From each cross-bar hung a noose; the end of the rope could be tied off to a handle at the base of the upright. The three prisoners, dismounted and walked up a ramp to the stage, where

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

the nooses were adjusted round the neck of each. This operation was recorded in close-up. The Hancocks were able to watch each man shudder as he felt the rope upon his neck. They noticed that Madder moistened his lips, and his adam's apple jerked comically in his throat beneath the rope. Although the hands of all three men were bound behind them, by the tension in Simpson's neck and shoulders, it could be guessed that even now he was trying to burst his bonds. Green was still, almost to apathy.

As the sheriff, an incongruous figure in his tricorne hat and horn-rimmed spectacles, read aloud from a scroll, the priest was seen to approach the prisoners. He had never been far from them in the truck, but they had seemed to hold no converse with him. The Hancocks could not hear the question he now asked, because the sheriff's adenoidal sing-song monopolized the microphone, but they noticed that Madder nodded in response, that Simpson only seemed the more angry, and that Green appeared not to have heard. Instead, he turned, so far as his position would allow it, to Mr Forbes. 'Do not let this be forgotten,' the Hancocks heard him say, as the sheriff finished the charge and began to read the sentence.

'... And there shall be hanged by the neck until you are dead.' The sheriff looked sternly at the Old Soldiers, as if to make sure that they understood their parts in the performance. 'Have you anything to say before the sentence is performed upon you?'

EXECUTION

Madder said, 'I am not guilty of the crime with which I am charged.'

Simpson said, 'You will be damned for this.'

'No, God save you all,' said Green. 'And God save my men. We are innocent of this crime.'

The three Old Soldiers pulled briskly at the ropes, and up rose the bodies, to hang there twisting, their necks curiously elongated. 'Don't look, mother,' Mr Hancock said, but neither of them could turn their eyes from the television screen. As the bodies rose into the air, a murmur rose also from the crowd on the beach, almost like a breath exhaled. Then there was a silence as the Old Soldiers made fast the ropes. Somewhere a child began to cry—simply, uncomprehendingly, as a child cries, not because the men had been hanged, but for some childish reason—hunger, perhaps, or tight shoes. The thin petulant sound broke the silence as the bodies twisted and swung. To the Hancocks, it was clearer than the sheriff's voice as he ordered the crowd to disperse, which now it began to do.

The television camera moved again about the faces of the people. They were not spiteful now, and not glad. Most had a placid, wondering look. Some of the women were weeping. 'If they feel like that about it,' Mrs Hancock said, 'why did they make all this fuss in the first place?' Mr Hancock said nothing, remembering his own part in mobbing the chancellor's automobile.) Husbands and wives walked together from the sands, the young men and girls in

THE TRUTH WILL NOT HELP US

groups apart. A middle-aged man in a raincoat had come to the aid of the woman with the perambulator, which was stuck in a patch of soft sand. Only the three Old Soldiers seemed unperturbed as they came forward to tug at the heels of the bodies and, when the beach was empty, to cut them down.

The picture faded from the screen.

'God bless us, mother,' said Mr Hancock. 'Who will be next?'

Mrs Hancock did not answer. Nor was the television announcer capable of doing so, preferring to bring to the attention of his audience the merits of a popular brand of cigarettes. They were milder, he said. Much milder.

